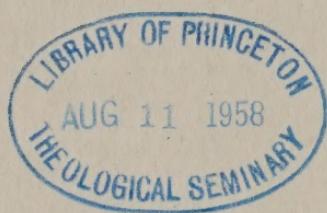
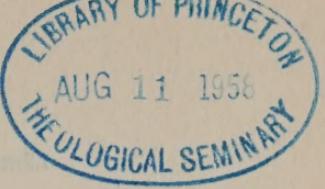


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Out of the Whirlwind



Out of the Whirlwind

*answers to the problem of suffering
from the BOOK OF JOB*

by William B. Ward

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To the members of Grace Covenant Church staff, whose faithful service to the Church gives their minister opportunity for study, this book is affectionately dedicated.

William H. Schutt
Elva Littlefield
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John B. Boyd
Martha Beggs
Frank O. Drummond

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Introduction

To many people who lack formal theological or Biblical training the book of Job is a virtually unknown section of the Bible. They realize that something of vast importance is being said in it, but have difficulty in understanding its message. This volume is an attempt to recount in non-technical language the story and message of the book, that it may be intelligible and significant to laymen.

This study follows the narrative form of the book, with introductory material regarding date, authorship, and style placed in the second chapter. The true beauty and significance of Job can best be expounded by following the narrative, thus studying each teaching in its dramatic setting. To discuss these personal experiences and passionate arguments solely in abstract terms is to miss the power and significance of the drama, and to be far less interesting than the book of Job itself. Since most readers of a volume such as this usually will not stop to locate suggested Bible references, the text of Job has been quoted rather fully. This serves to give a firsthand acquaintance with the style and language of the poem. Tedious critical discussions have been omitted.

The writing of this little book has grown out of a pastoral need. The author has wanted a book to place in the hands of those who have experienced some great pain or loss in their own lives or families and are puzzled by the problem of suffering. There is no better way of meeting their need than by leading them to study the book which is the greatest attempt in all literature to answer man's age-old question, "Why do good people suffer?", and the related question, "What kind of God rules this world?"

This volume should accomplish three things for the reader. First, after reading it he should understand the story and central message of the book of Job, that it may be for him a valuable part of the Bible; second, he should have constructive insights into the meaning of suffering and hardship in his own life, reconciling it to God's loving plan for him; and finally, through a study of Job he should see the necessity for a divine Mediator to make the supreme sacrifice which alone can "justify the ways of God to men."*

* Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I, 26.

Out of the Whirlwind

I.

Job Faces Calamity— *The Prologue*

(CHAPTERS 1-2)

One of the most perplexing questions man has ever asked is, "Why do people suffer?" Long before the time of Christ, the Greek philosopher Epicurus put the problem succinctly. He reasoned that if God is good, He must not be able to stop the suffering in the world. If He is able but does not stop it, He is not good. Therefore it is impossible to believe in an all-powerful, loving God. In spite of this argument of Epicurus men have continued to believe in an omnipotent God who loves them as a father. However, the question of suffering and pain in the world has rankled in the human breast through the ages as one of man's greatest unsolved problems.

The question becomes more acute when we ask, "Why do righteous people suffer?" When nature's destructive forces of storm, earthquake, and disease strike, good people seem to suffer equally with the evil. In the wholesale destruction wrought by modern warfare the best men and women, who have sought to use their influence for peace and righteousness, are slain. Little children who do not know good from evil are doomed to go through life maimed or blind. The problem of why good people suffer is a practical one which every individual has to face sooner or later in his own life. Every pastor is deeply concerned with it. Often it seems that God's saints, who seek most earnestly to serve Him, have more than their

share of pain and hardship. Pastors are frequently asked, "Why should this happen to me, or to my loved one?"

The question of righteous people suffering is a very old one. The prophet Jeremiah cried out to God, "Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?"¹ Habakkuk the prophet faced the same problem when he asked God,

"Why dost thou look on faithless men,
and art silent when the wicked swallows up
the man more righteous than he?"

(Habakkuk 1:13.)

The question leads us immediately into the most profound problems of theology and philosophy. Is there a God at all? Does He control the universe He has made, or is it merely operating on its own immutable laws without any great mind or heart which knows and cares about us? Are we, whom science has revealed as mere mites crawling around on the shriveled crust of one tiny planet, significant in the sight of the great Creative Power which rules all? If we are significant, then why does evil so consistently befall us and our world? These questions probe the meaning of God's way in His world. If He is a God of righteousness how can we justify His ways in the light of conditions as we know them? The problem of the innocent suffering leads us to the basic question of God, and of our salvation.

To find the answer to these questions is the purpose of the book of Job. Except for the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ it throws more light on the subject than anything else in man's experience. The book begins with the problem of why good people suffer, but almost immediately the discussion embraces the larger question, "What kind of God rules the world, and how can man be justified before Him?" The basic purpose is to reconcile God's justice and mercy with the conditions of human life. The book wrestles with the fundamental questions of religious faith, the being, character,

and purposes of God, and the meaning of human life and death. It seeks to clear the way for faith, so that man can believe in God no matter what troubles befall him. It foreshadows the New Testament with its answer to the question, "How can a man stand before God?"

The book presents the problem not in tenets of detached philosophy, but in the dramatic account of an individual's involvement in the bitter circumstances of life. It moves toward the answer, not by processes of logic alone, but by hard experience, passionate arguments, and finally a dramatic vision of God. This study will follow the narrative of the book, seeking to retain its movement of action and thought.

With these preliminary ideas in mind, we turn our attention to the opening scenes, which form the prologue to the drama.

"My Servant Job"

Most of the book of Job is written in poetry, but there is a prologue and an epilogue in prose, with the action beginning immediately. The curtain of the drama rises on a scene of perfect peace and prosperity. In one of the fertile sections of the great eastern region called Uz lived a man named Job. He is pictured to us as one enjoying a life of complete happiness and well-being. He had seven sons and three daughters, a total of ten children, the number which signified completeness. According to the custom of the time and region he measured his wealth in terms of stock on the open pastureage. Job had seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels, again seven plus three giving us the number of perfection or completeness. He also had a thousand oxen, five hundred asses, and many servants. Every material blessing one could desire was his, for we are told that of all the people in that Eastern land, he owned the most.

One might suspect that the man was morally evil, and had amassed his wealth by questionable business methods. But Job was as great morally as he was materially. We read that he was "blameless and upright . . . and turned away from evil." (Job 1:1) No man is

perfect in God's sight, of course, but from a human standpoint Job's integrity was inviolate. There was no secret sin buried in his life to torment his conscience. We learn later in the book that Job devoted a large part of his life to the service of others in need. He was a leader in promoting justice and righteousness in the land, courageous in condemning evil, and one whose words of wisdom were carefully heeded by all. Young and old paid him honor, and he lived as a beloved patriarch, adored and respected by all the people of his land. His place of honor in the community, and of love in his neighbors' hearts, meant more to him than his material possessions. He was as good as he was great.

In gaining material possessions and popularity Job had not compromised his soul. God Himself described him as "a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil," and said "there is none like him on the earth." (Job 1:8.) It is significant that Job possessed a depth of insight into man's moral nature which realized that sin might live unsuspected in the human heart. He thought to himself, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." (Job 1:5.) So he regularly arose early in the morning and offered burnt offerings for them. Job was as great spiritually as he was materially and morally.

Thus we have a picture of perfect prosperity and contentment. No family quarrels or jealousies marred the happiness. The sons lived in such harmony that they regularly invited each other and their sisters to family banquets in their several houses. Job could describe those happy days as the time

"when the friendship of God was upon my tent;
when the Almighty was yet with me,
when my children were about me;
when my steps were washed with milk,
and the rock poured out for me streams of oil!"

When I went out to the gate of the city . . .
 . . . the aged rose and stood;
the princes refrained from talking . . .
 the voice of the nobles was hushed . . .
• • • • •

Men listened to me, and waited,
 and kept silence for my counsel . . .
 and I dwelt like a king among his troops,
 like one who comforts mourners."

(Job 29: 4-10, 21, 25.)

The opening scene of the drama is a perfect picture of material prosperity, of honor and love in the service of others, of moral integrity and spiritual devotion.

In the Heavenly Court

When the curtain rises on the second scene we find that our anonymous dramatist has a daring stage setting. The scene is in heaven and God is on His throne. We read, "The sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord." (Job 1:6.) The "sons of God" seem to be angelic beings serving God in His heavenly glory. Even stranger words follow. "And Satan also came among them." The word "Satan" here literally means "the adversary," the one opposed to both God and man.

"Where have you been?" God asks, and the adversary replies that he has been walking up and down the earth. "Have you considered Job?" the Lord asks. "There is none like him on earth—blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil." (See Job 1:8.) In other words, "Satan, if you have considered him, you will know your evil designs are hopeless. Here is one who proves your wicked enticements futile."

These questions asked by God are the occasion of the whole story to follow. Immediately Satan replies, "Does Job fear God for

nought?" (Job 1:9 ff.) To elaborate, "Job is loving You only for what he can get out of You. You have built a hedge about him, to keep off evil from his family and all that he has. You have made his fields and his cattle produce. Who would not serve God under such circumstances? There is nothing altruistic or morally commendable about him. If You stop pampering him he will curse You to Your face." Satan is saying that there is no genuine religion; people are serving God simply because it pays material dividends. Actually what is called "fearing God" is a form of selfishness, which is of course evil and thus glorifies Satan, not God. These so-called God-fearing people are the most hypocritical of all, Satan implies, for they use religion itself to promote their own selfish interests. Satan challenges God, "You are deluding Yourself if You think they really love You. They are merely using You as a tool to get what they want from You, but they actually care nothing for You. Job is the best You have in all the world, but let me have my way with him, and he will curse You to Your face." Thus Satan challenges God's whole relationship to men.

In this strange scene in the heavenly courts God accepts the challenge. "Behold, all that Job has is in your power; only upon himself do not put forth your hand." As the curtain falls, Satan is going out to put his scheme into effect. The drama at this point is not of earth but of heaven; it is a challenge by the forces of evil in the universe to man's love for God, and the struggle will center on the unsuspecting Job on earth.

Back on Earth

When the curtain next rises the setting is on earth again, with the same scene we first witnessed. Job is leading his quiet life, materially prosperous, morally upright, spiritually devoted. His life could be offered as proof that faith in God pays dividends of prosperity and contentment, for all appears serene. But there is now a difference in that peaceful setting. We of the audience know what has

happened in the heavenly courts—that hanging over this idyllic scene is a sinister cloud. Job suspects nothing of the doom awaiting him, for in this drama he of course has not had our glimpse into the heavenly courts. He is contentedly enjoying his material comforts and resting his confidence in his God, whom he loves and trusts with all the integrity of his soul. The seven sons are holding their customary feast at the eldest brother's house, which may mean that they have completed their round of feasting and Job has made his offering on their behalf, to atone for any possible sin. This is the day Satan has chosen.

Suddenly and without warning the opening blow falls. Job is seated quietly on his doorstep when he sees a runner hurrying across the plain. It is one of his servants, who rushes up with a message, "In the back pasture your five hundred asses were feeding, and we the servants were plowing with the oxen beside them, when suddenly armed bands of nomads swept upon us. All the oxen and the asses have been lost, and all the servants slain, and I alone am left to bring the message." The peaceful scene has been ruthlessly shattered.

While the servant is yet speaking another comes running up, breathlessly telling his story. "Your seven thousand sheep, worth a king's ransom, were grazing in the pasture when the lightning set the prairie grass on fire, a fierce wind swept the flames across the prairie so that every one of the sheep and the shepherds was killed, and I alone escaped to tell you."

We read again, "While he was yet speaking"—the blows are falling too rapidly for him to recover between the strokes; before the second servant has finished speaking another dashes up. "Your three thousand camels! The Chaldeans made a raid out of the hills; they came from three directions at once, cutting off all escape. They killed all the servants with the sword, and drove off the camels to their land, and I alone have escaped to tell you." Job's entire wealth is wiped out! In one hour his material prosperity is completely destroyed.

But the worst is yet to come. Down the road moves another servant, his head bowed in grief. And Job hears from him the greatest calamity of all. "Your seven sons and your three daughters were feasting together today in your oldest son's house. Suddenly without warning a tornado swept down the mountain passes and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people. All of them are dead. I alone have escaped to tell you!"

In one hour everything Job had worked for and cherished is lost, and he is left poverty-stricken and alone. What will he say now? In this drama we of the audience can feel the tension as the courts of heaven await Job's reaction. We read that then Job arose, and rent his robe and shaved his head—the Oriental way of showing grief—and fell upon the ground, and worshiped. It is one of the grandest acts in all literature—he worshiped God! Then he spoke: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21.)

In its context this is one of the most thrilling statements ever made, showing that Job's trust and love for God are unshaken. So that we may be sure there is no mistake, we are told, "In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong." (Job 1:22.) The curtain at the end of the first chapter falls with the great patriarch bowed in grief but still worshiping his God, "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

The Drama in Heaven

When the curtain next rises, at the beginning of chapter 2, the scene revealed to the audience is once again in heaven. God is on His throne. We have the same curious statement to introduce the action: "Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord." Again the Lord says to Satan, "Where have you been?", and again Satan gives his noncommittal reply, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up

and down on it." Then God asks again, in the same words as before, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" This time God pointedly adds, "He still holds fast his integrity, although you moved me against him, to destroy him without cause." In other words, "You have lost the argument, Satan. Men do love and serve God for His own sake, and religion is more than selfishness. Both God and man have been vindicated."

But Satan is not ready to surrender yet, and he replies with a cryptic proverb, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life"—or his health, we would say. The origin of the proverb is obscure, but Satan goes on to explain his use of it. "But put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." (Job 2:5.) Satan is saying, "Job is still better off than most people, for he has not a pain or infirmity in his body. Religion is still a good bargain for him. But every man has his price; You just let me have his bone and flesh, and before I am through Job will curse You to Your face." Again Satan has made his challenge, and again God accepts: "Behold, he is in your power." God makes one limitation, "only spare his life." To this Satan naturally agrees, for to make Job a martyr for his faith would not serve Satan's ends. Satan will keep him alive, but will torment him until he rejects and curses God. As the curtain falls the sinister figure of Satan is slipping out of the presence of God, to continue his attack on the unsuspecting and innocent Job.

On Earth Again

The curtain rises once again on the scene on earth. We see the figure of the grand old patriarch, bowed in grief at his heavy loss but still holding with all his integrity to his religious faith: "Blessed be the name of the Lord." But we of the audience who have had a glimpse into the heavenly court see another ominous cloud hanging

over his head. In one terrible stroke the doom falls. One might wonder what further misfortune could come. Job has just been reduced from the wealthiest man in the region to complete poverty; he has lost all his sons and daughters. But the calamity which now strikes is the worst fate which could befall a man in those days.

There is some difference of opinion among commentators regarding the nature of Job's disease, and no exact diagnosis is possible. The Hebrew word *shekin* is translated "sore boils" in the King James Version, and "loathsome sores" in the Revised Standard Version. Detailed descriptions of the symptoms of the malady appear during the discussion in the chapters which follow. From these passages most scholars agree that Job was afflicted with one of the several skin diseases commonly called leprosy. Many of the symptoms peculiar to leprosy are described in various passages later in the book. (See Job 7:5, 14ff; 30:16-18, 28-31.)² *Leprosy* was the most terrifying word which could be spoken in the East. It would make an outcast of the most beloved man in the city. A king on his throne would be thrown out like a dog. The affliction usually comes on gradually, but in Job's case his entire body was suddenly covered. We read in later chapters that his skin has turned black and is shedding off (Job 30:30), pain gnaws at him without rest (Job 30:17), he is feverish (Job 30:30), maggots eat his flesh (Job 7:5). The sores not only cover his body but form in his mouth and throat, strangling him in his sleep and afflicting him with choking nightmares. (Job 7:14-15.) His appearance is so changed that friends do not recognize him. (Job 2:12.) The unclean and miserable disease took away a person's last shred of hope, for there was no known cure. Job longs desperately for quick death to put an end to his misery, but the leper could look forward only to a long period of loathsome suffering followed by a lingering death. The leper in ancient days was forced to leave his home and the comfort of his family's ministrations, and we find Job sitting on the ash heap outside the village, a pathetic figure, scraping off the secretions of his disease with a piece of broken pottery.

At this point his wife comes out to him, and we look for one ray of human comfort to alleviate the unbroken gloom. But his wife's approach brings the last stroke. She says, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God, and die." (Job 2:9.) In other words, "What is the use even to try any longer; there is nothing to live for. Renounce God, and let Him kill you for your blasphemy." His wife, mother of his children, has broken first under the strain. Unwittingly she has sided with Satan, and Job is left alone, without human or divine comfort. His wife's counsel for suicide must have been a temptation, perhaps the greatest temptation of all, for Job himself longs for the release of death. But we read that Job gently rebukes his wife, putting the most charitable interpretation possible upon her blasphemy. He says she speaks as foolish women would speak, implying that in ordinary circumstances she would have known better. Then from Job's lips comes the sentence which is the climax of the prologue: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Then the writer concludes, "In all this Job did not sin with his lips." (Job 2:10.)

God and His government of the world have been vindicated; Satan has been proved wrong; the angels of heaven can rejoice. No more scenes of the drama are laid in heaven, for that part of the story is over. But on earth grave problems have been created. No human character in the story has seen the action which took place in the heavenly courts, and the question now in all minds is, "Why did this good man have to suffer?" "Why does God govern His world in this way?" To find the answers to these questions is the burden of the subsequent chapters of the book of Job.

II.

The Background of the Book

With the opening of the drama already considered, and the great problem with which it is to wrestle presented, let us pause in our study of the narrative to consider some of the questions frequently asked about this little-understood part of the Bible. Who wrote it? When was it written? Is the story to be considered as literal history, or as parable? How is it to be related to the rest of the Old Testament? Is it really going to solve the great problem it has raised? To such questions let us now address our attention.

The book of Job is not easy for modern readers. It is conceived on the same grand style as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, neither of which is on the best-seller lists of today. This may explain why Job has been described as the most quoted—or misquoted!—book in the Bible, and the least read.¹ Someone has said, "Job is like the ancient sphinx, imparting the fact that it has a secret, but forever leaving us to guess what it is."² Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov* exclaims, "How much that is great, mysterious, and unfathomable there is in it! . . . The greatness of it lies just in the fact that it is a mystery."³ No effort is being made in this study to comment on all the difficult and puzzling passages it contains, but a little attention will reveal this as one of the pivotal books for an understanding of the Bible, and one of the most practical and helpful for the everyday problems in our lives.

The Date

In spite of the fact that this book has been studied by scholars for centuries, there are still many things no one knows about it. We cannot be sure when the material was placed in written form, for no dates are mentioned in it. Most scholars believe that the traditional story of Job related in the prologue and epilogue may well come from the patriarchal period early in the Old Testament history. However, the main body of the book as we now have it could hardly have been written before the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (722 B.C.) or later than the return of the Judean exiles from captivity (538 B.C.). The sixth century B.C., the approximate time of the Babylonian Captivity, would be the consensus of most scholars. However, wide difference of opinion is found. "There is almost no age of the world, from the patriarchal times down to the period after the Captivity, to which the book has not been assigned."⁴

The Author

The book of Job is anonymous as we have it, and attempts to name the author are little more than pure speculation. A list of the guesses scholars have made includes Solomon, Isaiah, King Hezekiah, King Jehoiachin, Baruch the scribe of Jeremiah, Elihu, Job himself. Some have imagined the author to be a Hebrew exile from the Northern Kingdom hiding in the Arabian desert. Whoever he was, he is recognized as one of the foremost literary geniuses the human race has produced. He was a scholar, well versed in the literary forms of his day. He was a traveler, conversant with the greatest thought of his age. He was what we today would call a scientist, deeply interested in all natural phenomena—the stars and constellations, the winds and storms, all manner of birds and beasts. He was a keen observer of human nature, a practical psychologist with profound insights into the human mind. He was a superb storyteller, for the drama is packed with narrative interest. He was

a philosopher, passionately concerned with the greatest problems of human thought. He was deeply religious, with the idea of God and His ways dominating his life. How strange it is that one of the greatest thinkers and writers of all time should be nameless; yet the book of Job contains no hint to disclose who was its author.

Many questions have been raised concerning the unity of the book. As was mentioned, most scholars believe that the traditions underlying the prose narrative in the prologue and epilogue may be several centuries older than the theological discussions which form the main body of the work. The general setting of the prologue is of the patriarchal period, while the rest of the book is in a style which best fits the period of the Exile. Aramaic phrases are found which did not come into use until the Exile, and the theological ideas best reflect that period. The whole problem of suffering and God's purpose in it was particularly acute following the great national catastrophe of the Babylonian Captivity, as people asked with deep urgency the theological questions with which Job deals. What probably happened was that some unknown poet of about the sixth century B.C. took the old tradition of Job's unparalleled disasters, handed down for centuries, and skillfully used it as a setting for his attempt to justify God's ways to men. In this same way Homer, Milton, Shakespeare, and others have used old traditions as settings for their greatest works. If we keep this in mind we shall better understand the stylized form of the prologue and epilogue, the symbolic numbers given for possessions and family, and the form in which the restoration is pictured in the closing chapter. These are typical of the style an ancient patriarchal tradition assumed, and the author probably made few adaptions in using it as a setting for his poem.

Students have often pointed out that the figure of Job in the prologue seems to contradict Job as he is pictured in the dialogues. In the former, Job piously accepts his misfortunes without questioning the essential goodness of God. The argumentative section, on the other hand, shows a Job bitterly resentful and blaming God for

his lot. However, a careful study shows that though Job's patience is worn thin by the long argument and he is in deep despair, through it all he still keeps a measure of trust in God. His harshest invectives are hurled not against God but against the caricature of deity the friends advance to support their arguments.⁵ Though certain of the chapters of poetry, such as the ones containing the speeches of Elihu (chapters 32-37), may well have been added by a later poet, the book as we now have it is fundamentally a literary unit.

The Location

We do not know where the action of the book might have occurred. The opening sentence begins, "There was a man in the land of Uz." All that scholars can say specifically of Uz is "In Arabia; uncertain."⁶ The general term "land of Uz" was used to describe that broad, sparsely settled region east of Palestine now included in Iran and Arabia. In this arid land tribes have lived a nomadic existence since the beginning of history, settling for a while by some oasis where water creates temporary pasturage, then wandering on to find grazing for their flock by some other wadi-bed. Old Arabian traditions place the scene of Job's sufferings northeast of Palestine, near Nawa in the Hauran, and some modern scholars suggest the oasis of Jauf (or Djowf) southeast of Palestine;⁷ but the book itself gives no exact location.⁸

No references are made in the book to any events in the history of the Hebrew people, nor to any of the peculiar institutions of the children of Israel. No other person in the Old Testament is mentioned. Aside from one reference to the Jordan River (Job 40:23), nothing in the land of Palestine is mentioned in the entire book. In fact, the fauna and flora described are more characteristic of Egypt than of Canaan. Some parallels to the theme of the book have been found in the literature of ancient India, Egypt, and especially Babylon. There is an interesting Hindu legend of a king tempted much as Job was after a wager between the gods. The king faces

many calamities but remains true to his oath through it all, and is fittingly rewarded in the end. However, none of these legends approaches the scope and insight of Job, and the book as we now have it remains unique in the world's literature.

History or Parable?

The question naturally arises, Was this man Job a historical character, and did the events of the book actually happen to him? Again the opinion of scholars is divided. It is well to remember that Orientals today commonly use stories with some basis in fact, though they do not hesitate to rearrange the details to suit the moral point the story is presenting. We notice here that symbolic numbers—3, 5, 7, 10—are used to describe Job's wealth and family. Undoubtedly the restoration of Job's fortunes in the last chapter is described in stylized terms.⁹ Most of us would probably agree with Martin Luther, who taught that the patriarchal tradition was probably based on fact, that there was such a person as Job in ancient times who endured great trials for his faith, but that the book as we now have it is a dramatic poem, enlarging and interpreting the old tradition.

The book interests us not because it describes what happened to one particular character but because it interprets what happens, in one form or another, to all people. The dates in history and the locations on the map are not of major concern, for the problem is timeless and placeless. The figure of Job is in reality "everyman," and what happens to him is an interpretation of every life. The value of the book is in its interpretation of the ways of God for the daily living of all men.

Satan

One of the perplexing questions of the prologue concerns the figure of Satan. "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among

them." (Job 1:6.) The word Satan, meaning adversary, may be used here not as a proper name, but to designate an office. He is "the leader of the opposition" in the heavenly court. The development of the doctrine of demonology took place after the book was written, and implications from its long history are not to be read into this scene. It is well to remember that the Bible never pictures Satan in red tights, with horns on his head, a pitchfork in his hands, and a long tail beating the air behind him. Such caricatures may be the invention of Satan himself, to persuade people that since such a figure is manifestly absurd, the whole idea of evil is absurd and can be forgotten as mere superstition!

Satan is here pictured as a being of keen intelligence, ready to engage in a battle of wits with God Himself. He is cynical, doubting man's goodness and God's wisdom, appreciating no motives save self-advantage. He seems to receive his power by God's permission. Under that permission, however, the forces of the universe—storms, disease, robber bands, fires—obey his will in limited fashion. He is the spirit of evil, wandering over the world, allied to nothing but his own selfish ends, seeking what trouble he may cause. His origin, his nature, why God permits him to exist and exert his evil way, are questions left unanswered by the author of Job.

As we read the first chapter of Job we inevitably ask why God would bargain with Satan in this strange fashion. It seems beneath the dignity of God. We question God's fairness, not only to Job, but to the children who were killed, and to the unnumbered servants who lost their lives in the series of catastrophes. If our question is about the manner in which the bargain is presented we must remember that our author is probably using an old tradition, whose details are not integral to the argument here. If our question is the basic one of why God allows evil, we should remember that this is the fundamental problem of the book, which the author of Job is not attempting to answer at this point, but is merely presenting. How well he answers it is only to be determined at the close of the story.

In this opening scene in heaven he is showing that Job's suffering is caused by the great force of evil in the universe, operating under the permissive will of God. The form of the dialogue with Satan is merely the writer's method of presenting the problem with which the whole book wrestles.

Poetic Form

From a purely literary standpoint, the book of Job contains the finest poetry in the Old Testament, and is one of the great masterpieces of all time. Thomas Carlyle said that nothing written, in the Bible or out of it, is of equal literary merit. Victor Hugo called it "the greatest masterpiece of the human mind." Walt Whitman put the author of Job first among the mighty poets of all time, before Homer, Dante, or Shakespeare. Tennyson described this book as the greatest poem of ancient or modern times. Martin Luther said, "Magnificent and sublime as no other book of Scripture"; and other literary critics have been equally lavish in their praise. Literature and theology, abstract philosophy and deep personal emotions, reach their finest blend here.

Though the prologue and a brief epilogue are in prose, most of the book is written in exquisite Hebrew poetry. The Revised Standard Version, from which our quotations are taken, shows the poetic form in the English translation. We will notice that Hebrew poetry does not rhyme, and the meter is determined not by the *number* of syllables but by the *stresses* or *accented* syllables in each line. But the peculiar feature of all Hebrew poetry is parallelism of thought, which gives a pleasing rhythm of ideas. In the couplet, which is the most common arrangement, the thought is expressed in the first line and a parallel or similar thought is stated in the second. This parallelism is of various types. Sometimes the thought in the second line of the couplet is synonymous with the first line, giving almost exactly the same sense.

“But where shall wisdom be found?
and where is the place of understanding?”
(Job 28:12.)

Again the parallelism is antithetic, with the second line giving the obverse side of the same idea.

“He does not keep the wicked alive,
but gives the afflicted their right.”
(Job 36:6.)

Constructive parallelism, in which the second line adds to the thought begun in the first line and carries it to completion, can be identified also.

“They spend their days in prosperity,
and in peace they go down to Sheol.”
(Job 21:13.)

or

“Behold, happy is the man whom God reproves;
therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty.”
(Job 5:17.)

Other forms of parallelism have been identified, and often the stanza has three lines instead of two, such as in the following passage where Job is cursing the day of his birth:

“That night—let thick darkness seize it!
let it not rejoice among the days of the year,
let it not come into the number of the months.”
(Job 3:6.)

Regardless of the exact form, it is the rhythm of thought which gives Hebrew poetry its beauty.¹⁰

The poetic effect of the book is heightened by its vivid imagery and striking metaphors, many of which have become household sayings.

“I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.”
(Job 19:20.)

“Man is born to trouble
as the sparks fly upward.”
(Job 5:7.)

“No doubt you are the people,
and wisdom will die with you.”
(Job 12:2.)

“Life is a breath.”
(Job 7:7.)

“Man that is born of a woman
is of few days, and full of trouble.”
(Job 14:1.)

“Does not the ear try words
as the palate tastes food?”
(Job 12:11.)

“Those who plow iniquity
and sow trouble reap the same.”
(Job 4:8.)

“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle.”
(Job 7:6.)

“Is there any taste in the white of an egg?”
(Job 6:6—King James translation; Hebrew
meaning uncertain.)

Striking imagery and beauty of style help to give Job its place among the great literary masterpieces of all ages.

Outline

The book of Job is in dramatic form, though it was certainly not written to be produced on a stage. There are five major parts.

First is the prologue in prose, giving the setting of the drama. It contains three scenes on earth and two in heaven. (Chapters 1-2.)

Second is the argument between Job and three friends, which is the main body of the work, all in poetry. (Chapters 3-31.) Job speaks first; then the discussion moves three times from one friend to the other, with Job replying to each. In chapter 28 a poem extolling wisdom is included.

Third, we have a long monologue in poetry by another character named Elihu. (Chapters 32-37.)

Fourth is the vision of God, and His words to Job and to the friends, also in poetry. (Chapters 38-41.)

Fifth, a short epilogue in prose, giving the final answer of Job and the concluding events. (Chapter 42.)

As Job wrestles with his problem all the truths which philosophy can advance fail to meet his need. We shall see how he moves step by step from a purely speculative problem to a search for a satisfying way of daily living. He is led by the argument to see dimly but truly the necessity for a God who really knows, understands, and loves His people. Job also comes to see the need for a mediator between God and man, and the necessity for a future life in which man can be justified. He finally realizes that only God's grace can save—that not the good works or the righteous character of man, but the unmerited favor of God is the answer to man's sinfulness, and that the true basis of life is humble trust. The final truth of the book can be put into words which are the theme of both the Old and New Testaments—"the just shall live by faith."

After this summary of background, let us now return to the narrative of the book and to Job, sitting on the ash heap outside the village, bereft of all his fortune and the comfort of his family, afflicted by a hopeless disease, asking the age-old question, "Why?"

III.

Job's Comforters— *The Three Friends*

The news of Job's unparalleled series of catastrophes traveled rapidly across the Eastern lands, and soon three friends were journeying to bring him comfort. Over in Teman, a city of Edom famous for its philosophers, lived a sage named Eliphaz, a friend of Job's. In the tribe of Shuah, probably a nomadic group roaming in that Eastern land, lived another friend named Bildad, noted for his wisdom. In the city of Naamah, now of uncertain location, lived the third philosopher friend, Zophar. As the news of Job's misfortune reached them they made an appointment to meet and comfort their friend.

When they first saw him they did not know him, his condition and appearance being so altered by his calamities. When they recognized him they themselves were overcome with grief. Though they had come together "to condole with him and comfort him," they were so shocked at his pitiful state that they gave expression to their grief in dramatic Oriental fashion—they wept aloud, rent their robes, and sprinkled dust on their heads, mourning as they would for the dead. Then for a symbolical seven days and nights they sat on the ground by Job in silence, a picture of abject grief.

The section which follows is the longest in the book. For almost thirty chapters we have the argument between Job and his three friends. After Job's opening words there are three cycles of speeches, in which each friend speaks in turn and Job answers. In the third

cycle there seems to have been some disarranging of the text, and a rearrangement of this cycle will be suggested later. The entire section, which is the major portion of the book, is written in the finest Hebrew poetry in existence. Regardless of which character is the speaker in the drama, the literary artistry is equally exquisite. Numerous allusions to God in nature and deep insights into the meaning of human experience characterize the entire section. Some of the references are difficult to explain, and still baffle scholars. Before we turn to a study of the details of these chapters, let us give a broad summary of the course of the argument.

The problem is why Job, an apparently innocent and righteous man, should have experienced such unparalleled suffering and loss. The questions soon range over all God's dealings with men, and include the meaning of human life and the character of God Himself.

The Friends' Philosophy

All three friends advance the same argument, which was the orthodox explanation of suffering in those days. Suffering was God's punishment for sin. If a man did good, peace and prosperity would follow. The righteous man

" . . . is like a tree
 planted by streams of water,
 that yields its fruit in its season,
 and its leaf does not wither.
 In all that he does, he prospers.

The wicked are not so,
 but are like chaff which the wind drives away."
 (Psalm 1:3-4.)

We read again in the Psalms,

“Fret not yourself because of the wicked,
be not envious of wrongdoers!

For they will soon fade like the grass,
and wither like the green herb.

Trust in the Lord, and do good;
so you will dwell in the land, and enjoy security.

• • • • • • • • •
For the wicked shall be cut off;
but those who wait for the Lord shall possess the land.

Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more . . .”

(Psalm 37:1-3, 9-10.)

We also find this statement of the psalmist,

“I have been young, and now am old;
yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken
or his children begging bread.”

(Psalm 37:25.)

The end of the wicked is suffering, pain, and despair in this life. The wages of evil are always paid. Be sure your sins will find you out. “Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” (Galatians 6:7.)

This philosophy was based on men’s knowledge of God. Since God is just and holy, it is unthinkable that evil should prosper or good suffer loss. Must not the Judge of the earth do right? Any honest earthly judge will reward the good and punish the evil; God cannot do less.

“Depart from evil, and do good;
so shall you abide for ever.

For the Lord loves justice;
he will not forsake his saints.”

(Psalm 37:27-28.)

This philosophy was widespread and was accepted without question by most people. We find the same idea expressed negatively when someone says, "What have I done, that this trouble should happen to me?"

Eliphaz stated the argument concisely in his opening speech when he said that no innocent man was ever cut off and allowed to perish. Those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same, because of the just will of God. The philosophers were saying, "If you sin you will suffer." Then they reasoned, "If you suffer, then you must have sinned."

The philosophy was readily applied to Job. Since his loss and suffering have been great, his wickedness must be great. In fact, since he has suffered more than anyone the friends have ever known, he must be the most sinful man they have known. True, he had given the appearance of righteousness, but what has happened has revealed that all his apparent righteousness was a fraud and a hoax. Thus he has aggravated his evil by the sin of hypocrisy. The argument can be summed up in a neat syllogism. Major premise: since God is just, He always punishes sin with suffering. Minor premise: Job is undergoing exceptionally great suffering. Inescapable conclusion: Job is an exceptionally great sinner! There is no mystery at all; any intelligent person can understand. The friends recommend to Job that he admit he is a hypocrite and a scoundrel, that all his piety has been a mockery and his noble life a sham. In chapter after chapter this argument, buttressed by illustrations from human life and from the nature of God Himself, is advanced against Job.

Job's Answer

Job's immediate reaction is to protest his own innocence. Though he admits that he is not perfect before God (Job 13:26; 14:4), he insists that his punishment is far more than his sins and failures deserve. In fact, in the heat of the argument he makes extravagant claims for his own goodness, insisting that he has served God with

perfect integrity of heart and his fellow men with complete unselfishness.

Job of course admits that God punishes sin with suffering. However, he finds two fallacies in his friends' argument. One is the practical fallacy—it just does not work out that simply in everyday life. He says he has seen men steal the widow's ox and the orphan's inheritance and move the landmarks of the poor—and still get by, living to old age in peace and prosperity. He asks,

"Why do the wicked live,
reach old age, and grow mighty in power?
Their children are established in their presence,
and their offspring before their eyes.
Their houses are safe from fear,
and no rod of God is upon them.
• • • • •

They spend their days in prosperity,
and in peace they go down to Sheol.
They say to God, 'Depart from us!
We do not desire the knowledge of thy ways.
What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?
And what profit do we get if we pray to him?'
Behold, is not their prosperity in their hand?"
(Job 21:7-9, 13-16.)

His practical answer to the friends' philosophy is that it is not true to the facts of life as he has observed them.

Then Job sees the theoretical fallacy in their argument. If they are correct, then people will be good for selfish reasons. If by keeping the Ten Commandments men can be assured of "health, happiness, and prosperity" they will be righteous merely for what they can get out of it for themselves. Religion will be just another form of selfishness—the worst form, because it is hypocrisy. In fact, we can see that the friends are unwittingly playing into the hands of Satan. In

the debate which began in the heavenly courts Satan said, "Does Job fear God for nought?", implying that religion is merely a smart way of keeping out of trouble and of assuring material prosperity. The three friends with their argument are unconsciously furthering Satan's cause.

Job, however, is at a loss to answer the question of why this calamity has befallen him. His statements range from bitter questioning of God's goodness to great expressions of faith and trust, from fierce rebellions and bleak despair at his lot to some of the most profound insights the Old Testament offers into the ways of God. Goaded by his friends' increasingly bitter and unfair accusations, Job desperately clings to his own righteousness. God *must* be wrong; he will stand up to God, bold in his own integrity, and prove to the world that he, Job, is right and God is wrong! But slowly, as the argument progresses, he begins to lose some of this self-assurance. Though at the close of his last speech he is still insisting on his own righteousness, we can see that his heart is being prepared for the climactic vision of the drama when God Himself will appear on the stage. In the next chapter we shall study more carefully the progress of Job's reaction to his friends' philosophy.

One must admire the beauty of expression and rhetoric in the friends' speeches and admit that there is much truth in what they say. They emphasize the glory, wisdom, and justice of God in profound figures of speech. They paint with broad strokes the sin of man, pointing out Job's pride and self-righteousness. In the beginning of the argument at least they make an honest attempt to justify God's ways. But the great theological fallacy of their argument is that it leaves no room for God's grace and mercy. Religion is put on a purely bargain basis, as Satan had suggested at the beginning. The central theme of true religion, man's faith in God's grace, has no place. They have no real religion at all, in the strict sense of the word, but merely an impersonal philosophy. Their chief failure, so

far as the personal situation in the drama is concerned, is in not meeting Job's needs. Where he needs sympathy, they offer argument; where he needs understanding, they offer dogmatics; where he longs for the fellowship of friends, they offer condemnation for him and self-righteousness for themselves. They come with cold logic to answer a deep personal need. Hence the sarcastic expression, "Job's comforters." We remember Blake's famous drawing of the three friends with self-righteous expressions on their faces, pointing fingers of scorn at Job, who is crying desperately to God for pity.

Though each of the three friends has the same general line of argument, a careful study of the speeches reveals that each has his own personality and each has a different approach to the situation. All three are dogmatists, but each gives his dogmatism a different basis and each expresses it in a different form.

Eliphaz the Patriarch

Eliphaz is the oldest, old enough to be Job's father, and thus is allowed to speak first in each of the three cycles. He is the most gracious and conciliatory, a venerable and devout seer. Though a dogmatist like the others, he is less harsh and denunciatory. He is considerate of Job's feelings and is tender and delicate in pressing his logic home, at least in the beginning. He is the mystic, basing his views upon his mystical experience of God's revelation, which he describes vividly in his opening speech.

"Now a word was brought to me stealthily,
 my ear received the whisper of it.
Amid thoughts from visions of the night,
 when deep sleep falls on men,
dread came upon me, and trembling,
 which made all my bones shake.
A spirit glided past my face;
 the hair of my flesh stood up.

It stood still,
 but I could not discern its appearance.
 A form was before my eyes;
 there was silence, then I heard a voice:
 'Can mortal man be righteous before God?
 can a man be pure before his Maker?'"
 (Job 4:12-17.)

In this striking vision Eliphaz claims a supernatural origin for his wisdom. However, the message is anticlimactic, for the wisdom which is revealed is the same trite argument which had been used for ages. But Eliphaz is undoubtedly sincere and is the most likable of the friends.

Bildad the Traditionalist

The second speaker is less tender and appealing than Eliphaz, more harsh and callous in his argument. He does not share the mystical approach of Eliphaz but is a scholar of the traditionalist school. His arguments are almost invariably derived from the traditions of the fathers. He advises Job,

"For inquire, I pray you, of bygone ages,
 and consider what the fathers have found;
 for we are but of yesterday, and know nothing,
 for our days on earth are a shadow.
 Will they not teach you, and tell you,
 and utter words out of their understanding?"
 (Job 8:8-10.)

"Back to the fathers" is his motto; all wisdom is found in the past. Most of Bildad's speeches are quotations of ancient proverbs and maxims, which he regards as the final truth. His eyes are on the past, and he is suspicious of anything contrary to the dogma of "the fathers."

Zophar the Bigot

Zophar is the youngest and the least attractive of the three. He is of coarser grain, intolerant and impetuous. He bases his dogmatism only upon his own wisdom. His speeches add nothing to the argument, but are harsh, dogmatic assertions of the positions already advanced by the other two. He shows none of the courtesy we associate with Oriental culture, but turns on Job with biting sarcasm, saying that Job talks too much and says nothing.

“Should your babble silence men,
and when you mock, shall no one shame you?”
(Job 11:3.)

He says Job is so evil that he deserves even more punishment than he is getting! His impetuosity leads him to extreme statements which detract from the more restrained logic of his companions.

He says in a thinly veiled reference to Job,

“But a stupid man will get understanding,
when a wild ass’s colt is born a man.”
(Job 11:12.)

Since the argument between Job and his three so-called “friends” is the greatest formal attempt in the literature of the Old Testament to “justify the ways of God to men,” let us review the argument of each one and watch the slow development of Job from bitterness and despair to the faith by which he is prepared for a vision of God.

IV.

Justifying God's Ways— *The Great Argument*

(CHAPTERS 3-31)

For seven days and seven nights the three friends sat on the ground by Job, their robes rent, dust on their heads, speaking not a word, "for they saw that his suffering was very great." (Job 2:13.) It was the typical Oriental way of expressing profound grief. Job himself broke the silence, and in his first speech regrets that he was ever given life. The contrast between the stoical faith of Job in chapters 1 and 2 with the bitterness and despair of chapter 3 is one of the arguments advanced for composite authorship.¹ The beauty of the Hebrew poetry only makes more poignant the depths of the despair to which he has sunk.

Job Longs for Death (CHAPTER 3)

First Job curses the day of his birth, earnestly wishing he had never been born. He wishes that day had been stricken from the calendar and darkness had overcome it. Let the great monster of chaos rise up and destroy the light of that day! He wishes that the world had come to an end before he was conceived. Then he expresses the passionate desire that he had died at birth so that he would now be a citizen of the Abode of the Dead. The shadowy, unreal existence of that Underworld would be better than the despair of his present life. Why cannot he find death, when he would rather have it than

any treasure? (See Job 3:21.) To go down into the quiet rest of the grave would be a blessing compared to the awful groanings, fears, and troubles which now afflict him.

“Why did I not die at birth,
 come forth from the womb and expire?
 Why did the knees receive me?
 Or why the breasts, that I should suck?

 Or why was I not as a hidden untimely birth,
 as infants that never see the light?

 Why is light given to him that is in misery,
 and life to the bitter in soul,
 who long for death, but it comes not,
 and dig for it more than for hid treasures;

 Why is light given to a man whose way is hid,
 whom God has hedged in?”

(Job 3:11-12, 16, 20-21, 23.)

The impassioned speech closes with a brief description of Job's disease.

“For my sighing comes as my bread,
 and my groanings are poured out like water.
 For the thing that I fear comes upon me,
 and what I dread befalls me.”

(Job 3:24-25.)

“Why? Why?” is the constantly repeated theme, the poignant question wrung from the lips of the tortured man. Strangely enough there is no question of suicide here—merely an anguished longing for the release of death. Job's opening speech has been called a study in the anatomy of despair.²

Life After Death?

It is well to pause here in the narrative and consider the ancient Hebrew conception of life after death. The teachings of heaven and hell as we know them developed in later Jewish thought and in Christianity. In early Old Testament days men believed that all the dead descended into a place called Sheol. The root meaning of the word seems to be "a hollow place" or "a pit." It is often translated "the grave," but the usual meaning is the abode of the dead. Sometimes in the book of Job the word Abaddon is used as a synonym for Sheol. The place is usually described as one of dust and darkness, from which there is no escape. Man's existence there is said to be hollow and meaningless, a mere shadow of the virile life on earth.

"Let me alone, that I may find a little comfort
before I go whence I shall not return,
to the land of gloom and deep darkness,
the land of gloom and chaos,
where light is as darkness."

(Job 10:20-22.)

Job in his opening speech paints one of the most optimistic pictures the Old Testament gives of Sheol. He calls it a place of quiet where men can rest in sleep; there the wicked cease from troubling and the weary rest. Prisoners are free from the taskmaster and the slave free from his owner. Kings and rulers of the earth rest together with the slaves and prisoners. (Job 3:13-19.)

Other passages in the Old Testament describe Sheol as a place of silence (Psalm 115:17), of desolation and terror, with no opportunities for fellowship and worship of God (Psalm 6:5; Psalm 30:9). Moral distinctions in Sheol were few, if any, and it was believed that all men alike, without respect to rank or character, went down to the shadowy existence which had neither reward nor punishment. According to an ancient Hebrew proverb, "a living dog is better than a

dead lion," because "the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward; but the memory of them is lost. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and they have no more for ever any share in all that is done under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 9:4-6.)

Ezekiel (Ezekiel 32:17-32) gives us an imaginary journey through Sheol in one of the most striking passages in the Old Testament. He sees the kings of the nations—Egypt, Assyria, Elam, Edom, Sidon, Meshech, Tubal—each lying in state in his grave. Around each is his army, slain with the sword, lying in graves. The great hosts which marched victoriously over the earth, spreading terror and destruction, now lie impotent in this shadowy, grave-like existence.

Since there was no real meaning to life in Sheol, men looked for immortality in the lives of their descendants, which is one reason why children were so highly prized by ancient Hebrews. We shall see that the book of Job accepts this limited view of life after death but reveals its failure to meet man's needs, and thus prepares the way for the more satisfying conception of later Judaism and Christianity. Job, in his opening speech, when he longs for death and what lies beyond, is far from expressing the pious hope of a Christian, who waits for the rest and blessedness of the heaven of the Christian faith. To long for the existence found in Sheol was to express the deepest despair.

The First Cycle of Speeches

First Speech of Eliphaz—“Suffering Is Caused by Sin”
(CHAPTERS 4-5)

Eliphaz is quite considerate of Job's feelings in advancing his argument. He begins with a courteous rebuke: Job has comforted others, has strengthened weak hands, upheld him who was stum-

bling, made firm feeble knees. But now, as soon as trouble has come upon Job, he has fallen into despair. "Where is the word of advice you gave others, about making God your confidence, and the integrity of your ways your hope?" Then Eliphaz states the fundamental philosophy on which all three friends base their argument. It is clearly put in the words:

"Think now, who that was innocent ever perished?
Or where were the upright cut off?
As I have seen, those who plow iniquity
and sow trouble reap the same.
By the breath of God they perish,
and by the blast of his anger they are consumed."

(Job 4:7-9.)

God punishes evil and rewards good. Those who have done evil are bound to suffer dire consequences, and they have no one to blame but themselves. Eliphaz the mystic seeks to prove his philosophy by telling of a supernatural vision he has seen. In the darkness of the night a ghostly spirit or form stood before him, and out of the silence spoke to him the final word of truth that God is sure to punish all evil. The best thing for Job to do is to confess to God that all his piety has been hypocrisy and that his service to his fellow men has been fraudulent. When he repents of his wickedness and accepts his sufferings as God's just punishment for his sins, and throws himself on God's mercy, God will come to his aid. God is not only powerful and wise; He is righteous and merciful, working His way of justice in the world. The crafty and wily and proud are destroyed, but those who humbly repent and turn to Him are delivered. If Job will confess his sins, God will cure him of his disease; He will restore his fortunes; He will give him more children to take the place of those who were lost and will keep him from all the troubles and afflictions of life. Eliphaz closes with a beautiful picture of the peace and prosperity Job can have.

"At destruction and famine you shall laugh,
 and shall not fear the beasts of the earth.
 For you shall be in league with the stones of the field,
 and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you.

• • • • •

You shall come to your grave in ripe old age,
 as a shock of grain comes up to the threshing floor
 in its season."

(Job 5:22-23, 26.)

The whole philosophy of the friends is expressed in this opening speech of Eliphaz, with a beauty, a compassion, and a winsomeness not achieved elsewhere in their argument.

Job's Reply—"Is God My Enemy?"
 (CHAPTERS 6-7)

Job does not reply directly to Eliphaz's logic, but reacts to the failure of his friends to help him in his dire need. Their cold philosophy which assures him that all his troubles are caused by his sins does not bring him the comfort he needs; instead it plunges him into even deeper despair. He begins by stating in even stronger terms the terrible condition in which he finds himself. His friends just do not realize how desperate is his situation, which calls for sympathy and comfort, not the indictment of a cold philosophy. In his present state he cannot maintain a rational argument; he only asks for sympathy. Again he begs that God would grant his desire and send the release of death. Then he bitterly upbraids his friends for failing him in his need for understanding and help.

"He who withholds kindness from a friend
 forsakes the fear of the Almighty."
 (Job 6:14.)

He likens his friends to a wadi in the desert which was full of water in the rainy season but dried up in the time of drought. Thirsty travelers come for a drink, remembering how the torrent bed was filled with water at other times. But now when they are hot and thirsty and need the refreshing drink most, they find it dry and are left to perish for thirst. "Such you have now become to me." (Job 6:21.)

Job says his friends are so heartless that

"You would even cast lots over the fatherless,
and bargain over your friend."

(Job 6:27.)

He begs them to turn and take his side before God. He cannot get his mind off his terrible condition—the sores that harden and break open, the worms and dirt that cover him, the long days of misery; and when he tries to get rest at night, Eliphaz's stories about visions and ghosts bring nightmares to him. Oh, that he could die! And his friends are no help.

In fact, Eliphaz's "comfort" has brought a new disturbing thought, that it is God Himself who is causing all Job's calamity. Here, as throughout the book, there is no doubt of the divine existence, but doubt of the divine character. Why should God have any pleasure in torturing a poor human being? Is God a friend or a foe? We find a strange echo of Psalm 8 in the words, "What is man?" (Job 7:17.) The psalmist asked,

"What is man that thou art mindful of him,
and the son of man that thou dost care for him?"
(Psalm 8:4.)

But now Job asks, What is man that God wants to torture him so, visit him every morning with trouble, and think of him only to torment him? God watches over men just to afflict them; all Job asks is that God will forget him and let him alone. Job seems very

near losing the thing to which he held so stoically in the prologue—his faith in God. The only hope he can see now is in death. Again the pitiful question “Why?” closes Job’s speech.

A practical truth suggested to us at this point in the conversation is that out of the discipline of our own suffering we learn how to comfort others in need. One reason the friends were failing Job in his crisis was that they themselves had never really suffered. They could not put themselves imaginatively in Job’s position and understand his need for sympathy and love, because they had never known the bitter anguish of deep distress. As Job put it later on in the argument, “In the thought of one who is at ease there is contempt for misfortune . . .” (Job 12:5.) Thornton Wilder, in a playlet entitled “The Angel That Troubled the Waters,” sums up this truth in the words “In love’s service only wounded soldiers can serve.”³

First Speech of Bildad—“Consider the Fathers”
(CHAPTER 8)

Bildad is more harsh than old Eliphaz, and begins abruptly without even the form of Oriental courtesy. He says Job’s words are but a foolish wind out of his mouth—that Job is really accusing God of perverting justice.

“Does God pervert justice?
Or does the Almighty pervert the right?”
(Job 8:3.)

Then Bildad does a callous thing. Instead of trying to help his friend with sympathy and comfort, he apparently tries to hurt him at his most sensitive spot. He harshly suggests that the reason Job’s children were all killed is because they were unusually wicked and deserved destruction! It is difficult to imagine a statement less designed to bring comfort to a sufferer. Then Bildad says pointedly to Job, “If you are as pure and upright as you say, surely God will rouse Himself to reward you with peace and prosperity!”

Bildad bases all his reasoning upon the traditions of the fathers. We in this age know nothing, he says, but the fathers of old will teach us. He sets himself up as the champion of the wisdom of the ages, whereas Job is the rebel against all true wisdom. He quotes tedious proverbs to prove his point—that the wicked suffer and the righteous are blessed. It is all very simple for Bildad: if Job will just repent and turn to God, He will give him all his material prosperity again.

“Behold, God will not reject a blameless man,
nor take the hand of evildoers.

He will yet fill your mouth with laughter,
and your lips with shouting.

Those who hate you will be clothed with shame,
and the tent of the wicked will be no more.”

(Job 8:20-22.)

Job's Answer—“God Is the Adversary!”

(CHAPTERS 9-10)

In this impassioned answer Job seems scarcely to have heard Bildad, but to be replying to the things Eliphaz said in the preceding speech. Often in the argument he appears not to answer the last speech made, but the preceding one. In these two chapters Job reaches the lowest depths of his bitterness. The problem is no longer the problem of suffering; it is now the problem of God! Job speaks of the great power of God, who overturns the mountains in His anger and shakes the earth out of its place, who stops the sun and blots out the stars,

“Who does great things beyond understanding,
and marvelous things without number.”

(Job 9:10.)

The emphasis is on the destructive forces of nature; no one can stop God in His awful power, or reason with Him. For God, says Job,

uses His power like a despot. He shows neither justice nor mercy; righteousness and wickedness are the same to Him. Job is really denying that there is any moral order in the universe, so what is the use of trying to live a good life; even if man were innocent God would condemn him just as quickly. In fact, in the frenzy of the argument Job says that God actually favors the design of the wicked!

"When disaster brings sudden death,
 he mocks at the calamity of the innocent.
The earth is given into the hand of the wicked;
 he covers the faces of its judges—
 if it is not he, who then is it?

Does it seem good to thee to oppress,
 to despise the work of thy hands
 and favor the designs of the wicked?"

(Job 9:23-24; 10:3.)

God made man with His own hand, carefully fashioning him with skin and flesh and bone and sinew, giving him life and love and spirit; but God's purpose is just to torture and destroy him. It makes no sense to Job—why should God be so stupid as to destroy the being He so carefully made? No wise man would do this. The answer must be that since God is not man, He has no pity on suffering men, but is like a lion, tracking them down to their destruction just for the fun of it.

Job desperately wishes that he could bring God to trial before an impartial tribune and get justice—and we shall find Job often repeating this desire. But then Job realizes he would not have a chance; his very innocence would be turned into guilt, and he is helpless before the cruel power of God. It looks as if Satan is on the verge of winning his bet—that Job will curse God to His face. Again Job gives a pathetic recital of the torments of his disease, and closes with the piteous questions, "Why does God torment

me? Why was I ever born? Why will not God leave me alone, that I may have a little comfort before I go to the land of gloom and chaos, where light is as darkness?" (See Job 10:22.)

A careful reading of these two chapters reveals that in this bitterest outcry Job does one most significant thing—he shows the need of a Saviour. Someone must bridge the void which separates man from God. Job says of God:

"For he is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him,
that we should come to trial together.

• • • • •

Hast thou eyes of flesh?

Dost thou see as man sees?
Are thy days as the days of man,
or thy years as man's years . . . ?"

(Job 9:32; 10:4-5.)

Job is saying that man will never be sure God understands him until God Himself becomes man.

A story is told of two men discussing theology as they walked together. One, an agnostic, stopped and pointed with his cane to an anthill at their feet. "It is just as impossible for God to understand our needs and problems as it is for us to understand the problems of these ants," he said. His friend, a Christian, replied, "There is only one way; that would be for you to become an ant and live in the anthill with them for a while. That is what God has done in Jesus Christ."

With profound insight Job goes on to say,

"Would that there were an umpire between us,
who might lay his hand upon us both."

(Job 9:33—alternate reading.)

This umpire or mediator would take away God's rod of punishment so that man could speak to God without fear. Job's dilemma would

never be completely resolved until "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (John 1:14.) This section of Job has been called "an instinctive prophecy of the Incarnation."⁴

First Speech of Zophar—"Shame on You for Such Talk!"
(CHAPTER II)

The roughest and least sympathetic of the three friends now launches his attack on Job. There is no vestige of sympathy or comfort, or even of courtesy. He calls Job a babbler and a mocker, "full of talk." If God would just speak, says Zophar, He would show that He is really punishing Job less than his guilt deserves. "What do you know about God?" says Zophar. "He is far too great for you to delineate His power and character." Zophar sets himself up to say exactly what God would speak to Job if God should suddenly appear. He offers no proof of his argument save his own dogmatic assertion. His reasoning is exactly the same as that of the other two friends. Job's case is a very simple one; his suffering is due to his sin, and he is just another man who refuses to acknowledge his guilt. "Now, Job, if you will just get your heart right, and put away your wickedness, and turn again in penitence to God, then you will forget all your misery, your fears will be turned into confidence and joy, your old prosperity will return, and you will rest in safety. And your life will be brighter than the noonday. But if you do not, there is no hope for you. The way of escape is lost to the wicked, and death is the only thing left for them."

Job's Reply—"I Have a Little Sense!"
(CHAPTERS 12-13)

Job's answer is directed not so much at Zophar's speech as at the attitude and argument of all three friends. He begins sarcastically,

"No doubt you are the people,
and wisdom will die with you."
(Job 12:2.)

But, he goes on, I have sense too; I am not inferior to you. I can see the wisdom and power of God in the world; the beasts, the birds, the plants, the fish, all declare that God controls all life and breath of men and of animals. Wisdom and power are with Him; He controls all physical nature. The kings and captains and priests and judges are under His control. The great nations of the earth owe their existence to Him. I know all this, just as you do. But you whitewash God with lies; you speak falsehoods to justify Him when you try to claim that God uses His power for righteous ends. Nature shows the wisdom and might of the Creator, but justice is not revealed. The truth is, robbers and idolaters fare just as well before God as the pious do. I would like to take my case directly before God Himself, stand boldly before Him face to face, and defend my ways even if He killed me for it! "God," Job cries, "grant me two things! Take away this terror so I can speak, and then answer me! What are my sins and iniquities that these 'friends' claim are so foul? Tell me, so I will know! Explain why you treat me like an enemy and torture me!"

Job closes his speech (chapter 14) with a soliloquy on the transiency of human life. Man's days are short and full of trouble; he is like a flower or a shadow; death is certain and final. A tree may sprout again after it falls, but when a man dies he

"... lies down and rises not again;
till the heavens are no more he will not awake,
or be roused out of his sleep."

(Job 14:12.)

All that is left for him is Sheol.

But then, just at this point, there comes a fleeting hope of life after death. Suppose man should live again!

"If a man die, shall he live again?
All the days of my service I would wait,
till my release should come.

Thou wouldest call, and I would answer thee;
thou wouldest long for the work of thy hands.
For then thou wouldest number my steps,
thou wouldest not keep watch over my sin."
(Job 14:14-16.)

For a moment Job glimpses the thought that the only answer to his dilemma would be in a future life after death, where his sins would be forgiven and he would commune with and serve his Lord. But the hope fades as quickly as it came. As the mountains fall away and crumble, and as floods wash away the soil, so this final hope of man perishes. Even the immortality which men cherish in the lives of their children means nothing to him. Job ends his speech seeing no prospect for man but inevitable senility, and after that hopeless extinction for everyone. "So thou destroyest the hope of man." (Job 14:19.)

The Second Cycle of Speeches

Instead of helping Job with love and understanding, the three "comforters" with their cold, harsh dogmatism have irritated and goaded him to desperate utterances. As Job becomes more insistent upon his own innocence, and condemns the divine order of the world, he only deepens his friends' conviction of his guilt. In the eyes of these hardhearted philosophers he is adding to his former sins that of self-righteousness and blasphemy against God. So they, too, become increasingly harsh and denunciatory; their emotions begin to flame, and they become more reckless in their charges. No longer do they assure Job that repentance and subsequent prosperity will be his; rather they picture in lurid terms the terrible fate of the evil man, which is certainly Job's lot. Instead of being sympathetic and helpful, they become bitter, revealing a spirit closely akin to hatred. The tortured soul of Job, finding no comfort in heaven or on earth,

cries out for pity and help. Very gradually he moves through the darkness of despair toward the faint light of God's vindication.

Second Speech of Eliphaz—Job's Guilt Grows Greater
(CHAPTER 15)

Eliphaz in his second speech dispenses with courtesy and sympathy and turns against Job with biting sarcasm and stern rebuke. Job's words are all wind, like the east wind that withers. It is almost beneath the dignity of a wise gentleman like Eliphaz to reply to such! Job by his own blasphemies has revealed his horrible iniquity. He is guilty right now of the worst sin of all, rebellion against God.

“Your own mouth condemns you, and not I;
your own lips testify against you.”
(Job 15:6.)

Why do you think you are so smart, Job, that you know more about God than all the truly wise men who have lived? You talk as if you were the only wise man on earth, when in reality you are

“...abominable and corrupt,
a man who drinks iniquity like water!”
(Job 15:16.)

Now let me show you real wisdom, says Eliphaz, which all truly wise men understand. The wicked man is in trouble all his life. He has pain, poverty, and fear; he is forced to beg for bread; distress and anguish terrify him; his children all perish. Even if he has outward prosperity for a while, tortures of conscience beset him all his life. In short, the wicked man during his lifetime is paid off in full for his iniquities. He suffers because his greatest iniquity is exactly the same thing you are guilty of now—

“Because he has stretched forth his hand against God,
and bids defiance to the Almighty.”
(Job 15:25.)

Eliphaz closes his speech without mentioning any hope or restoration. His words are a threat of the sure doom awaiting Job.

Job's Answer—“Miserable Comforters!”

(CHAPTERS 16-17)

Job lashes back bitterly, calling his friends “miserable comforters” with “windy words.” If our situations were reversed, he says, I could speak as you do, “and shake my head at you.” But I would not; I would bring strength and solace to you, instead of adding to your misery. Again Job complains of his desperate lot, protesting his innocence and putting all the blame on God. God is like an archer, with Job as His target; God is like a warrior torturing a helpless victim. Job seems in a frenzy at times. God, he cries, has worn me out, made me desolate, shriveled me up, torn and hated me, gnashed His teeth against me. I was getting along fine till God came and seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces, though I have done no violence and my prayer is pure. But God has even closed the minds of my friends so that they give me no understanding, though my condition is so very pitiful.

Occasionally a gleam of hope shines through, such as

“Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,
and he that vouches for me is on high.”

(Job 16:19.)

Here Job, in a great act of faith, seems to appeal to a “real” God in contrast to the caricature of his friends’ argument. But the light is fleeting, and the only prospect seemingly left for the sufferer is death, which appears at times to be very near.

Second Speech of Bildad—The Fate of the Wicked

(CHAPTER 18)

Bildad adds nothing to the argument here. He sarcastically reproves Job for trying to upset the whole order of the universe. “Who

do you think you are? You assume that we are as dumb as cows, but you in your angry frenzy expect the whole order of creation to be changed, just so you can sin and get by! Well, it will not work out that way, in spite of all you say." Then Bildad enters into a detailed description of the terrible fate the wicked man brings upon himself. He seems to enjoy reciting in great detail the dread calamities that befall the wicked one—his light is put out; his steps are shortened; his own plans become a trap which trips him up. Terrors chase him everywhere he goes; he contracts loathsome skin diseases (!); he is put out of his own house; his children all die; everybody turns against him.

"Surely such are the dwellings of the ungodly,
such is the place of him who knows not God."
(Job 18:21.)

The details of the description so exactly fit Job's calamity that no one can miss the point he is emphasizing, that Job has brought all these troubles upon himself by his own exceptional wickedness. That calamity should follow evil is the normal order of the universe.

Job's Reply—Hope in the Midst of Despair
(CHAPTER 19)

Job begins by telling his friends that they ought to be ashamed of themselves for the way they are torturing him with their exaggerated arguments. Again, in the frenzy of his defense he puts the blame for his condition upon God, who has shown neither justice nor mercy upon him. Job's basic question is, "Is God an enemy or a friend?" God has become like a hostile army setting up an attack against him. Again he bitterly reviews the details of the sorry condition into which God has brought him. All his friends and loved ones, his guests in his home, even his servants, have turned against him.

“I am repulsive to my wife,
 loathsome to the sons of my own mother.
 Even young children despise me;
 when I rise they talk against me.
 All my intimate friends abhor me,
 and those whom I loved have turned against me.
 My bones cleave to my skin and to my flesh,
 and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.”

(Job 19:17-20.)

The last phrase seems to mean that he has escaped only with his life, everything else being lost.

Then, in a quick change of mood characteristic of the anguished soul, he appeals to his friends for pity.

“Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends,
 for the hand of God has touched me!
 Why do you, like God, pursue me?
 Why are you not satisfied with my flesh?”

(Job 19:21-22.)

Then again the mood changes, and the closing paragraph of this speech contains one of the most profound insights of the book.

“For I know that my Redeemer lives,
 and at last he will stand upon the earth;
 and after my skin has been thus destroyed,
 then without my flesh I shall see God,
 whom I shall see on my side,
 and my eyes shall behold, and not another.”

(Job 19:25-27.)

This in its context is one of the greatest exhibitions of personal faith in the whole Bible; it is a pivotal passage in the long history of man’s search for God and of God’s revelation of Himself. The passage is

difficult, and we should not read into it the full Christian revelation which was to come centuries later. The word for "Redeemer" means literally a "vindicator" or "champion" or "defender"—one who takes legal action for another who is incapable of doing so himself. In a moment of intuitive insight Job knows that after his death he will plead his case before God himself and God will openly defend and justify him. Death has always been in Job's eyes the final barrier between him and God, making his justification hopeless. For a moment now he sees through the barrier, and with rare insight realizes that his justification will come after death. Here are clear hints of the two great answers the New Testament gives to the whole problem—the knowledge of a Redeemer or Mediator who will represent both God and man, and the certainty of personal existence in a future life, without which this life has little meaning.

The place of this passage in the argument suggests to us one value of suffering in our own lives; it shows us the necessity of belief in life after death, if life here is to have true meaning. To Job the ancient Hebrew conception of a dim and shadowy existence in Sheol was proving unsatisfactory. In the depths of his despair he realized that there must be a future existence in which good is vindicated and evil punished. Life loses its meaning if it is for this world only. "One world at a time" is too shallow a motto if this present life is to have true significance. As Martineau put it: "If Death gives a final discharge to the sinner and saint alike, Conscience has told us more lies than it has ever called to their account."⁵ Job's suffering has led him to this insight; our own suffering can likewise teach us that belief in everlasting life is necessary if we are to find our present existence worth while.

But this great insight is a mere hint in this passage, thrown up in the heat of the argument by Job's tortured soul, and its implications are not developed at this time. In the last two verses of the chapter Job is returning to his same old controversy with his friends, warning them that divine justice will be theirs for their condemnations.

Second Speech of Zophar—“All Nature Conspires Against You”
 (CHAPTER 20)

Zophar, of course, ignores the profound insights of Job's speech. All he does is quote again ancient proverbs to “prove” that calamity always follows wickedness. It may be delayed for a while, as it was in Job's case, but the time inevitably comes when God visits His just punishment upon the wicked man, as He has now upon Job. Zophar, like Bildad, gives a long and horrible picture of the fate of the evil man, showing that all nature, and all society, as well as God, conspire to make his doom sure. The wicked man cannot keep his riches; his health will fail; a poisonous serpent will slay him; hostile armies will chase him; arrows will strike him through; his house will burn down; his treasures will be lost. To sum up,

“The heavens will reveal his iniquity,
 and the earth will rise up against him.”
 (Job 20:27.)

We are reminded of the lines in *The Tempest*,

“..... for which foul deed
 The powers, delaying, not forgetting, have
 Incensed the seas and shores, yea, all the creatures,
 Against your peace.”⁶

The theme of Deborah's song of victory over the Canaanites was the same.

“From heaven fought the stars,
 from their courses they fought against Sisera.”
 (Judges 5:20.)

Zophar concludes with the words,

“This is the wicked man’s portion from God,
the heritage decreed for him by God.”
(Job 20:29.)

The Answer of Job—“But the Wicked Do Prosper!”
(CHAPTER 21)

Job’s answer contains his direct reply to the basic argument of all three of the friends. He bluntly points out that their neat little philosophy just does not work in life. The wicked do prosper, and the righteous suffer, as anyone who looks about him can see. Here, in a passage (Job 21:7-16a) already quoted, Job points out how the wicked grow wealthy, their cattle produce, their houses are safe, their children grow up about them, their health is good, they spend their days in prosperity and peace; while they impudently ask, “Who is God, that we should serve Him, and what profit do we get out of praying to Him?” Job goes on to show that we cannot prove that justice is visited upon succeeding generations. The end for both good and evil alike is death.

“One dies in full prosperity,
being wholly at ease and secure,
his body full of fat
and the marrow of his bones moist.
Another dies in bitterness of soul,
never having tasted of good.
They lie down alike in the dust . . .”
(Job 21:23-26.)

If the philosophers doubt this they can just ask any of “those who travel the roads”; they will tell them that the wicked man is spared in the day of calamity, that he “gets by.” Even after he is gone from the earth the generation which follows will honor the evil man with a lavish funeral, a big procession going before and after to the grave,

and much weeping over his tomb. But the righteous man is forgotten. Job concludes:

“How then will you comfort me with empty nothings?
 There is nothing left of your answers but falsehood.”
 (Job 21:34.)

The Third Cycle of Speeches

At this point in the argument the three “friends” abandon all pretense of friendliness to Job or of restraint in their argument. Willfully disregarding the plain facts of their friend’s former life, they bluntly accuse him of the worst crimes they can imagine in the attempt to expose what they consider Job’s inexcusable self-righteousness. They lose their calm detachment and become more excited and extreme, moving on to personal abuses and actual falsehoods.

In this third cycle the orderly pattern of speeches, with each friend speaking in turn and Job replying to each, is broken. In the text as we now have it Bildad’s speech is in quite shortened form, and Zophar is not heard from at all. Moreover, some of the verses put into Job’s mouth are more closely akin to the friends’ philosophy than to Job’s. It seems clear that the text has been confused at this point, and some rearrangement of the material is necessary. The order followed here appears to be the most plausible of the several solutions which have been offered by various scholars.

Third Speech of Eliphaz—A List of Job’s Sins (CHAPTER 22)

“Is not your wickedness great?
 There is no end to your iniquities.”
 (Job 22:5.)

Thus Eliphaz opens his argument, and then adds a long list of sins he imagines Job has committed. They are the typical sins of greed associated with ill-gotten wealth. “Job,” he charges, “you have ex-

acted unjust pledges from the poor, and stolen the clothes off their backs. You have given no water to the weary and no bread to the hungry. You have not heeded the cry of the widow, and have crushed the orphans. You have said that because God is far away, up among His stars and hidden by His clouds, He does not know what is going on here on the earth. So you thought you would not be caught in your evil; but the wicked never escape, Job. God sees and knows all. Now confess all these sins to God. Instead of being so greedy for gold that you steal it from widows and orphans, make the Almighty your gold and your precious silver; pray to Him, humble yourself, and turn away from these evil ways, and God will bless you and save you."

"For God abases the proud,
but he saves the lowly.
He delivers the innocent man;
you will be delivered through the cleanness of
your hands."

(Job 22:29-30.)

It is the same old argument we have heard again and again.

Job's Reply—“Where is God?”
(CHAPTER 23)

Job counters that his basic argument is with God. He has tried to lay his case before God, but God is indifferent. He tells how frantically he has searched for God, but God appears totally unconcerned about him. Job goes forward and backward, to the left and to the right, seeking in every place for God, but he cannot find Him. Why does not God set up a regular court, where men can come to get justice? Then Job reiterates his argument that God rewards the wicked and punishes the good. He says that in spite of your nice theory of divine justice, in actual life the evil get by with their wickedness. Wicked men move ancient landmarks, steal flocks and

pasturage, take the ass from the orphan and the ox from the widow, insult the poor, kidnap helpless infants; they are murderers and adulterers and thieves, creeping through the night to do evil—and God lets them get by! But when a person like Job, who has kept all the commandments of God's lips and treasured in his heart the words of God's mouth, turns for help, he cannot find God. And when the poor, who work all day and are hungry and cold, lift a pitiful cry to God for help in their distress, "God pays no attention to their prayer." That is the way life is, concludes Job.

"If it is not so, who will prove me a liar,
and show that there is nothing in what I say?"
(Job 24:25.)

(Chapter 24:18-24 seems to most scholars not to belong to Job's reply, but probably is the speech of Zophar which is missing in this third cycle. It will be so considered.)

Third Speech of Bildad—"God Is Too Great to Do Evil"
(CHAPTER 25)

This speech contrasts the greatness and majesty of God with the weakness and sinfulness of man. Even the moon is not bright before God's glory, and the stars not clean before His purity; how much less man, who in God's sight is no more than a maggot or worm. Chapter 26:5-14 seems to be a displaced part of this speech of Bildad, giving a magnificent description of the glory of God in the heavens and on the earth. It is one of the most beautiful poems ever written on God's revelation of Himself in nature. Before such greatness, how can a mere man attempt to justify himself by his own righteousness?

Job's Reply—"My Conscience Is Clear"
(CHAPTER 26:1-4 and CHAPTER 27:1-12)

Job retorts with biting sarcasm, showing that his friends' eloquence on the majesty of God is no help to one needing solace and comfort.

Though they talk glibly about God's greatness, they do not reveal God's mercy by their help to one in need. Job then pledges that he will maintain his integrity and not succumb to easy but false solutions of life's problems. He says that as God lives and as long as any breath is in him, he will not hypocritically say that he is wrong and they are right just to get rid of his troubles and have his prosperity again. He will hold on to what he honestly believes is truth even if it kills him.

Third Speech of Zophar—“The Portion of a Wicked Man with God”
(Conjectural—CHAPTERS 24:18-24 and 27:13-23)

This is another harangue on the certain and awful fate of the wicked man. The floods sweep him away, and his life is forgotten in the town. If he is blessed with many children they will all be killed or will starve to death. If they do live, the plague will get them, and their wives will be glad to see them go! Though the wicked man become rich in his evil, he will lose all his wealth while he sleeps, and soon righteous people will be enjoying his riches and the just wearing his ill-gotten robes. His own house is no protection to him—fears and terrors chase him at night.

“This is the portion of a wicked man with God,
and the heritage which oppressors receive
from the Almighty . . .”

(Job 27:13.)

The argument is a pointed reference to Job—he is being punished justly by God for his great wickedness.

* * * * *

Thus the three friends close their argument on a bitter note. Unable to answer the logic of Job, they stubbornly and vindictively advance the same arguments over and over, with less understanding and more vehemence in each succeeding cycle of speeches. Before

we condemn them too bitterly, however, let us remember how easy it is for us to make their mistake when some pet orthodoxy of ours is challenged. How quickly we forget the personal needs of those who oppose us, and become calloused as we defend our own system! How readily we equate our own position with God's, and assume that anyone who opposes us is opposing the Almighty! How easy it is for us to discredit the character and life of the person who is opposed to us, assuming that only the truth as we hold it will produce righteousness and that those who disagree with us are not only mistaken but evil. If we are honest, we can identify ourselves with the reaction of these three men.

A Poem on Wisdom (CHAPTER 28)

Just at this point the course of the argument is interrupted by the introduction of a beautiful hymn on the value of wisdom. Many scholars think this is a later addition by another author, who perhaps felt that the concept of wisdom had experienced some rough handling by these philosophers and needed exoneration. It is too quiet and contemplative for either Job or the friends to have spoken it at this highly emotional stage of the argument, and so can hardly be considered an integral part of the drama but must stand as an independent psalm or poem. Its beauty of thought and expression, however, make it well worthy of study. The chapter reminds us of the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

The poem pictures a man in search of wisdom. First he decides he will dig for it like miners dig for silver and gold. Far down in the depth of the earth men cut out channels in the rock, and there in the darkness they find precious metals—iron and copper, all kinds of jewels. This is one of the most picturesque descriptions of mining in all literature.

“Surely there is a mine for silver,
and a place for gold which they refine.
Iron is taken out of the earth,
and copper is smelted from the ore.
Men put an end to darkness,
and search out to the farthest bound
the ore in gloom and deep darkness.
They open shafts in a valley away from where men live;
· · · · ·
Man puts his hand to the flinty rock,
and overturns mountains by the roots.
He cuts out channels in the rocks,
and his eye sees every precious thing.”

(Job 28:1-4, 9-10.)

But one cannot dig for wisdom and find it like miners in the earth. Then the searcher asks the sea for the secret, but the sea replies, “It is not with me.” Then he tries to buy it with gold and silver and precious stones, but he finds it too valuable to be purchased on the market. All the gems of the East are not valuable enough to be exchanged for wisdom. The birds of the air do not know its hiding place; death itself cannot open the secret.

Then comes the answer. God knows everything under the heavens; He created all the universe by His wisdom; He controls all nature by His knowledge and power. In the climax of the poem God shows to man the place where wisdom may be found:

“And he said to man,
'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
and to depart from evil is understanding.'”
(Job 28:28.)

In devotion to God, and in righteous living, we find the secret of true wisdom.

Job's Closing Monologue (CHAPTERS 29-31)

This speech is the closing appeal of Job to God, challenging the Almighty to consider his need. It is Job's summary of his entire position. In the first chapter of the monologue he pictures his former happy condition before the evil came. In those days he found happiness in his religious faith, in his home life, in his wealth, in his position of esteem in the community, in his service to his fellow men. It is the latter which he especially emphasizes, in beautiful figures. He tells us how he delivered the poor and the orphans, and gave justice to all who came to him. He was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame and a father to the poor. He broke the power of evil men like a man would break the fangs of a wolf and make him drop his prey from his teeth. Men waited for his words of wisdom as farmers wait for the rain, and his smile brought peace to all. His secret was God's watchful care over him—God's lamp shining upon his head and His light guiding his path day by day. Naturally he expected this life of quiet service to last all his days. In lovely figures he tells us he had assumed that he would multiply his days like the sand and spread out his roots to the waters, that his bow would ever be new in his hand and his glory ever fresh. Finally in his old age he would die in his nest, peaceful and contented in his worship of God and in his service to his fellows.

“But now”—and in the second chapter of the monologue we have the awful contrast of his present lot. Three times the word “now” is used to emphasize the hopelessness of his present condition. *Now* he is hated and scorned by his fellow men. Evil men who roam over the land like packs of dogs make sport of him. As an insult they spit when they see him and add to the calamity he is experiencing. They roll over him like a victorious army pouring through a breach in a beleaguered city's wall. And the God he has served offers him no help. *Now* he is tortured by his loathsome disease; the pain that racks and gnaws at his bones keeps him from sleep. His skin has

turned black and sloughs off; fever burns his bones; his voice is weakened with moaning, and violent pain chokes like a rope about his neck. The only prospect before him is slow and tortured death. Now, instead of quiet fellowship with God, he has been cut off, and is persecuted by God Himself. A cruel God is tossing him about like a leaf before the storm.

“God has cast me into the mire,
and I have become like dust and ashes.

• • • • •
But when I looked for good, evil came;
and when I waited for light, darkness came.

• • • • •
I am a brother of jackals,
and a companion of ostriches.”

(Job 30:19, 26, 29.)

His bitter complaint is that God will not hear his case.

“I cry to thee and thou dost not answer me;
I stand, and thou dost not heed me.

Thou hast turned cruel to me;
with the might of thy hand thou dost persecute me.”

(Job 30:20-21.)

Our Need for God

One lesson which Job has learned, which we can remember in times of trouble, is the value of suffering in ending our self-sufficiency. Our suffering reveals to us our need for God. Over and over again Job from the depths of his despair cries out for God. He has learned that without Him life has no meaning in the midst of trouble. The psalmist put it clearly,

“Before I was afflicted I went astray;
but now I keep thy word.”

(Psalm 119:67.)

"Pain jerks you out of comfortable and dangerous contentment, false certainty, and complacency. You think yourself master—till it comes." So a medical doctor writes.⁷ When all is well man can easily imagine himself self-sufficient, but in the trembling halls of suffering we know that God is a necessity. Paul had a thorn in the flesh, and he tells us that three times he prayed to God that it might be removed. But the Lord answered, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." And Paul adds, "I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Corinthians 12:7-9.) A leper patient in a mission hospital in the Orient recently said, "How thankful I am for my disease, for it brought me to Christ!" Job, in spite of his bitter attacks against God, has already learned a significant truth of life—we cannot live without Him.

The Oath of Clearance

(CHAPTER 31)

The closing chapter of the monologue is one of the most remarkable in the book. In those days if a man were accused of some crime he would take what was called an Oath of Clearance, swearing that he had not done this or that particular thing, and naming the penalty he would be ready to accept if he were found guilty. Job closes his argument by taking his Oath of Clearance. This chapter has been called "The Sermon on the Mount of the Old Testament," for it reminds us of the teachings of Jesus. Nowhere in the Old Testament do we have a statement of higher ethical views. Some have even suggested that we substitute this chapter for the Ten Commandments!

Sixteen possibilities of sin are advanced, most of them introduced by the word "if." They cover the accusations advanced by the three friends in their arguments. Each of these Job denies, under oath of grave punishment. He says he has not been an adulterer, he has not taken bribes, he has not spoken falsehoods, he has not failed to help

the poor, he has not been covetous for wealth, nor inhospitable, nor guilty of secret transgressions. He has never secretly practiced idolatry by worshiping the sun or moon. Job states that he has not mistreated his slaves, and gives us a most interesting statement of their position. He says if he had rejected their cause, how could he answer a righteous God who champions justice? Because, Job goes on to say, the same God who made me made my slaves also! This is one of the greatest arguments in the Bible against any theory of an inferior race or class. All men are made by the same God, and if we do not recognize the rights of all men, and give justice to all, how shall we answer the just God? The modern world has not yet reached this high ethical statement of Job. He says he has never rejoiced at the ruin of his enemies or exulted when evil overtook them—one of the most difficult ways of applying Jesus' command to love our enemies.

Every sin of which he has been accused by the philosophers he rejects under oath.

"If I have walked with falsehood,
and my foot has hastened to deceit;

then let me sow, and another eat;
and let what grows for me be rooted out.

If my heart has been enticed to a woman,
and I have lain in wait at my neighbor's door;
then let my wife grind for another,
and let others bow down upon her.

If I have withheld anything that the poor desired,
or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing,

or a poor man without covering;
if I have raised my hand against the fatherless,
then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder,
and let my arm be broken from its socket."

(Job 31:5, 8, 9-10, 16, 19, 21a, 22.)

With this Oath of Clearance Job rests his case. He has sworn by the most solemn oaths he knows that there is nothing in his life to justify his present calamity. The philosophy of men has failed to show a reason for it, or to provide human comfort and help.

Before Job closes he throws out one last challenge to the God of the universe. It is not a plea for mercy; it is a final expression of pride in his own innocence.

"Oh, that I had one who would give me ear!
Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer!
And if I had the scroll which my accusers wrote,
As a sign of rank upon my shoulder I would lift it,
Would wind it round my forehead as a diadem!
Would fearlessly declare unto him my steps!
Proud as a prince I would then meet my God!"

(Job 31:35-37. Translation by Alleman and Flack.⁸)

"The words of Job are ended." The three friends are through also. "So these three men ceased to answer Job because he was righteous in his own eyes." They have given him up as a hopeless case. The great argument is finished; the poignant cry of "why" is still unanswered.

V.

A Strange Interruption— *Elihu the Buzite*

(CHAPTERS 32-37)

The unknown author of the book of Job reveals his ability as a dramatist by introducing the unexpected. Just at this point in the narrative, when it would seem that everything possible has been said, a strange interruption suddenly occurs. Out from the shadows on one side of the stage appears a young man named Elihu. Though this is the first we have heard of him in the drama he seems to have been there all along, sitting on one side, listening to all the argument.

There are scholars who think the six chapters relating to Elihu are an addition by a later hand, done in an inferior style by some writer of lesser ability than the original author.¹ Others have even suggested that the young man is introduced as a touch of humor, a buffoon, to release the tension built up by the long argument. Though we must admit that the exact purpose of the strange interruption is puzzling, it supplies interest to the drama; and, as we shall see, emphasizes certain aspects of the problem of suffering.

Elihu is from Buz; hence he is called a Buzite. To make a pun, he comes “buzzing” into the argument saying, “I just *have* to speak! I cannot restrain myself any longer; I must speak right now!”

Elihu is angry. In the four verses which introduce him we are told four times that he is angry. He blazes out in two opposite directions. First, he turns on the three friends because they were worsted in the argument. He says he has been sitting there listening carefully

to every word they said, hoping they would have the wisdom to answer Job with the truth, but he has been disappointed. Then he turns on Job in anger because he justified himself rather than God. He has heard Job bragging, "I am clean and without transgression; I am pure, and there is no iniquity in me. God without any excuse is treating me like an enemy and torturing me." Elihu replies, "You are wrong, Job, and I will answer you and show you the truth." Elihu in his irritation at the course the long discussion took is now proposing to show that everybody else is wrong. He opens his long harangue by saying, "Now I am young, and you are old, and I thought age should speak first. But it is not always the old who are wise, so you old philosophers just listen to youth speak! I will show you what the truth really is. I just *have* to speak! I am full of words (no exaggeration!); I am like a wineskin ready to burst. Now you be silent, all of you, and I will teach you wisdom!"

So they listen; that is about all they can do! For six chapters Elihu the Buzite speaks, spending a large part of the time boasting of what great wisdom he is going to reveal. He apparently might have spoken even longer had not a storm come up and stopped him! Most of what he actually says, when he finally gets around to saying it, is the same old argument which has been rehashed over and over again.

After spending twenty-seven verses telling his hearers of what great things he is going to say, Elihu finally begins his argument. It is surprisingly like what we have already heard in the preceding chapters. Since God is just, the righteous are bound to prosper and the wicked to suffer. Job has suffered more loss than anyone ever heard of; therefore he must be the most wicked man ever known. He puts it in almost the same words as the other three philosophers used:

"He does not keep the wicked alive,
but gives the afflicted their right.

• • • • •

If they hearken and serve him,
they complete their days in prosperity,
and their years in pleasantness.

But if they do not hearken, they perish by the sword,
and die without knowledge.

• • • • •
They die in youth,
and their life ends in shame.”

(Job 36:6, 11-12, 14.)

Elihu is equally as severe on Job as were the three philosophers. Regarding Job's claim to innocence he says,

“For Job has said, 'I am innocent,
and God has taken away my right;
in spite of my right I am counted a liar;
my wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.'

What man is like Job,
who drinks up scoffing like water,

Who goes in company with evildoers
and walks with wicked men?

For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing
that he should take delight in God.'

• • • • •
Men of understanding will say to me,
and the wise man who hears me will say:

‘Job speaks without knowledge,
his words are without insight.’

Would that Job were tried to the end,
because he answers like wicked men.

For he adds rebellion to his sin;
he claps his hands among us,
and multiplies his words against God.”

(Job 34:5-9, 34-37.)

Elihu seeks to justify God's ways just as the three older philosophers did.

"Therefore, hear me, you men of understanding,
far be it from God that he should do wickedness,
and from the Almighty that he should do wrong.
For according to the work of a man he will requite him,
and according to his ways he will make it befall him.
Of a truth, God will not do wickedly,
and the Almighty will not pervert justice."

(Job 34:10-12.)

If Job is true, then God is unjust, which is manifestly absurd. Surely it is God who is right and Job wrong. The only plausible answer must be Job's great wickedness. Job has claimed that God does not answer him. Elihu shows that God communicates with man in various ways—by visions and dreams, by the chastisement of troubles, by the world of nature, and by a "vindicator" or "interpreter." Job is mistaken when he says God will not communicate with him. If Job's cries to God are unanswered it is because his prayers are merely empty expressions of his evil pride. God is too great and good to heed such scoffings as those of Job, who is wise in his own conceit. Elihu sums it up by saying,

"Job opens his mouth in empty talk,
he multiplies words without knowledge."

(Job 35:16.)

The reader feels that Job could have given the same response to the arguments of Elihu as he did to those of the more brilliant men who preceded him, but here Job is silent.

In the six chapters of Elihu's monologue, though much of it is the mouthing of platitudes already spoken by the others, there are occasional flashes of real insight.

The Disciplinary Value of Suffering

Elihu suggests, more than any of the other speakers in the drama, the disciplinary value of suffering. Character is made in conflict. Life, when lived in too easy an environment, becomes flabby. Pain has been called the moral calisthenics to strengthen character.² Elihu mentions this often in his speeches.

“And if they are bound in fetters
 and caught in the cords of affliction,
then he declares to them their work
 and their transgressions, that they are behaving arrogantly.
He opens their ears to instruction,
 and commands that they return from iniquity.
• • • • •
He delivers the afflicted by their affliction,
 and opens their ear by adversity.”

(Job 36:8-10, 15.)

“Man is also chastened with pain upon his bed,
 and with continual strife in his bones;
• • • • •
Behold, God does all these things,
 twice, three times, with a man,
to bring back his soul from the Pit,
 that he may see the light of life.”

(Job 33:19, 29-30.)

Job himself in one of his speeches also suggests this truth, in the parable of the goldsmith heating gold to purify it.

“But he knows the way that I take;
 when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

(Job 23:10.)

Eliphaz, too, hints of this use of adversity.

“Behold, happy is the man whom God reproves;
therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty.
For he wounds, but he binds up;
he smites, but his hands heal.”

(Job 5:17-18.)

For Christians the purpose of life is not pleasure, but growth in Christlikeness. Difficulties give strength to the moral fibers of our souls. The men who have become truly great are not those who had all the lucky breaks of life handed to them, but those who used disappointments and handicaps to make life worth while. Old Epictetus was a slave, and crippled, and never free from pain, but he made of life a glorious thing. Louis Pasteur was crippled by a paralytic stroke; Milton was blind; Beethoven was deaf; Helen Keller is deaf and blind. These did not find life made to suit them; they had to make it worth while. They did not sit around whining, “Why did this have to happen to me?” They used these very handicaps to make life noble. It is not what we meet in life, but how we meet it.

“Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth’s smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!”³

We notice that pain and suffering do not work automatically to make great souls of us. Whether afflictions make us cynical and bitter or develop us into Christlike people depends, under God’s Spirit, on us. The value of what happens *to* us is determined by what happens *in* us. Discipline “yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:11.)

A Prophecy of the Mediator

Elihu in his long monologue gives us another bold hint of “a mediator” to “declare to man what is right for him,” one who delivers man and says to him, “I have found a ransom.” (See Job 33:22-30.) As one commentator put it, “Unwitting prophet—as a prophet always is—Elihu, the pedantic apprentice, calls for the necessity of a Christ,” and sees “however distantly and vaguely—the face of the ‘interpreter,’ a mediator who would interpret God to man and man to God; indeed, an ‘intercessor’ who would himself be a ransom.”⁴

God in Nature

One phase of Elihu’s monologue which deserves special emphasis is his exquisite description of God’s glory revealed in nature. Throughout the book all speakers show a keen appreciation of the revelation of God in the natural world. It is strange that there are no references in the book of Job to God’s revelation in the history of the Hebrew people. The psalmists and prophets never tired of extolling the God who brought their ancestors out of Egypt and settled them in the promised land, protecting them by His power; but all such references are ignored by the author of Job. Other Hebrew poets praised God for the wonder of His law revealed through Moses to the people, and for the covenant He had made with them; yet the law and the covenant are not mentioned here. But the revelation of God’s greatness and power and glory in the natural world is a constantly recurring theme in the book.

Bildad in his closing speech, if our rearrangement of the text is correct, gives a magnificent description of God in nature—how He hangs the earth upon nothing, binds up the waters in His clouds and sweeps them by the breath of wind across the earth; how He created the day and night, and lays His quieting hand upon the sea. The speaker concludes:

“Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways;
 and how small a whisper do we hear of him!
 But the thunder of his power who can understand?”
 (Job 26:14.)

Elihu’s hymn on the glory of God in nature is unsurpassed.

“God thunders wondrously with his voice;
 he does great things which we cannot comprehend.
 For to the snow he says, ‘Fall on the earth’;
 and to the shower and the rain, ‘Be strong.’
 He seals up the hand of every man,
 that all men may know his work.
 Then the beasts go into their lairs,
 and remain in their dens.
 From its chamber comes the whirlwind,
 and cold from the scattering winds.
 By the breath of God ice is given,
 and the broad waters are frozen fast.
 He loads the thick cloud with moisture;
 the clouds scatter his lightning.
 They turn round and round by his guidance,
 to accomplish all that he commands them
 on the face of the habitable world.
 Whether for correction, or for his land,
 or for love, he causes it to happen.

Hear this, O Job;
 stop and consider the wondrous works of God.”
 (Job 37:5-14.)

We notice that throughout the book God is found not in the unusual, the miracle, but in the orderly course of nature. In fact, excepting the voice of God Himself speaking from the whirlwind,

there is no miracle of nature involved. But God is revealed in the order and beauty of His creation, in the march of the stars across the heavens and in the procession of the seasons through the year. Scientists find a kindred spirit here, for the author of Job sees God not in the supernatural, but in the natural, in the sustaining as well as in the suspending of His natural laws. Some look for a spectacular miracle—the stopping of the sun in Joshua's battle, or the drying up of the Jordan River to let the children of Israel pass. Only at such times do they cry, "There is God." But others see Him in the fact that the sun is not always jumping erratically around in the sky, but rises and sets so regularly that we count our time by it. In the steady flow of day and night, of summer and winter, God reveals His loving care for us. We trace His hand in the fact that our rivers move regularly on their way to the sea, turning our mills and draining our fields. We find God in the very fact that we can depend on His so-called laws of nature and order our lives by them. Jesus told His hearers that the heavenly Father could be seen in His quiet habits of nature, feeding the birds and clothing the flowers with a beauty rivaling Solomon. The author of Job is not constantly begging God for a miracle; miracle is all about him. As Job expressed it,

"But ask the beasts, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
or the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.
Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the Lord has done this?
In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of all mankind."

(Job 12:7-10.)

But the most beautiful descriptions of God's power and glory in the world come later in the book, when we study the Voice out of

the whirlwind, and the effect God's majesty and mystery have on Job.

Elihu concludes his argument by stating,

"The Almighty—we cannot find him;
he is great in power and justice,
and abundant righteousness he will not violate.
Therefore men fear him;
he does not regard any who are wise in their own
conceit."

(Job 37:23-24.)

This last clause is a pointed reference to Job.

Practical Values of Adversity

Since with Elihu's speech the long argument draws to a close, we shall here summarize the hints given in the discussion concerning the practical issue of suffering in our own lives. We remember that the drama begins with the question, "Why do good people suffer?" The attempt to answer this soon led into basic questions about the nature of God and the meaning of human life, but throughout the long discussion there has always been the problem, "Why should suffering and loss come to those who are good?"

We have seen that the answer of Job's friends is based on the ancient philosophy that suffering is always punishment for sin, so actually the good do not suffer. The element of truth in this philosophy is that God does punish sin, in this world and the next. This is a universe of law, in which certain results inevitably follow certain causes. But most of us would agree with Job that to make all suffering a punishment for wickedness creates far more problems than it solves. We have seen that from the theoretical standpoint the philosophy breaks down. If the good get all the breaks of life, and are freed from all troubles, goodness becomes only selfishness and men serve God only for material reward, as Satan insinuated in the

opening part of the drama. Neither is the philosophers' neat syllogism true to daily life as we know it, for often the godly suffer most. It is significant that Christ never promised immunity from the ills of life for His followers; in fact, He warned of quite the opposite. He promised His followers abundant power, glorious joy—and that they would get into trouble. "In the world you have tribulation," He said. (John 16:33.) Paul put it bluntly, "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12.)

As the discussion in the book of Job has moved round and round this problem, no complete answer has been reached. But time and again hints of the practical meaning and purpose behind suffering and loss are indicated. Though they are not answers to the problem, they do suggest how we may reap the "peaceful fruit of righteousness" which comes from the Lord's painful discipline. (Hebrews 12:11.)

Once Jesus and His disciples passed by and saw a man blind from his birth. The disciples, brought up on the prevailing philosophy of their day, immediately asked if the man had sinned, that he was born blind. Even as they asked the question, however, they must have realized how foolish it was. No man could sin before he was born. Then the thought came, perhaps the parents! They remembered the words, "I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me." (Exodus 20:5.) So their full question was, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2.) The answer of Jesus refutes the ancient philosophy underlying the thinking of both the friends of Job and His own apostles. Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him." (John 9:3.) This suggests to us that the misfortunes and afflictions of our lives can, by the alchemy of God, be used for good in His Kingdom; that the things the world counts loss can, by the

power of the Holy Spirit, be made to yield dividends of grace and righteousness.

We have noticed one implication of the book of Job, that the innocent must suffer lest people be righteous only to avoid suffering. Goodness cannot be used as a protection against disease or earthquake. If the righteous received all the "lucky breaks" of life, then men would be good for selfish reasons, and true righteousness would disappear. This was the assumption with which Satan began the drama, and Job suffers to prove that men serve God and live godly lives for other than selfish motives. This is one of the profound insights of the book, emphasized by the long argument between Job and his friends.

We have also seen that suffering has disciplinary value, strengthening our moral natures, like gold refined in a fire. Also, it opens springs of compassion in our hearts, that we may bring comfort to others in sorrow. It shows us our need for God when our own self-sufficiency is lost in pain and trouble. It shows the necessity of life after death if our present life is to have its true significance.

Reveals God's Love

In fact, we can go even further. Our pain and sorrows can even reveal God's love to us. Many patient sufferers have learned one of life's greatest mysteries, that our sufferings can actually be manifestations of the heavenly Father's care for us.

Elihu in his discourse comes very close to a positive statement of the love of God. In fact, his most important contribution to the problem is his teaching that our suffering is caused not by God's anger, but by His goodness; that affliction is often God's way of protecting His children from worse evil, and leading them to new heights of divine fellowship.

As Proverbs and Hebrews put it, "And have you forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons?—

'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,
nor lose courage when you are punished by him.
For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves,
and chastises every son whom he receives.'"

(Hebrews 12:5-6. Cf. Proverbs 3:11-12.)

Hebrews goes on to add, "It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? . . . Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:7, 9-11.) Peter expresses this truth clearly: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." (1 Peter 4:12-14.) And the psalmist can add,

"Blessed is the man whom thou dost chasten, O Lord,
and whom thou dost teach out of thy law."

(Psalm 94:12.)

That is why Paul could boldly say, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church" (Colossians 1:24)—for it is a manifestation of God's love.

Some unknown patient, ill in a hospital, wrote these lines on the wall of his room:

The cry of man's anguish went up to God,
"Lord, take away pain!
The shadow that darkens the world Thou hast made;
The close coiling chain
That strangles the heart; the burden that weighs
On wings that would soar—
Lord, take away pain from the world Thou hast made
That it love Thee the more!"

Then answered the Lord to the cry of the world,
"Shall I take away pain,
And with it the power of the soul to endure,
Made strong by the strain?
Shall I take away pity that knits heart to heart,
And sacrifice high?
Will ye lose all your heroes that lift from the fire
White brows to the sky?
Shall I take away love that redeems with a price,
And smiles with its loss?
Can ye spare from your lives that would cling unto Mine
The Christ on His cross?"⁵

The book of Revelation sums it up in the words of Christ, "Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten." (Revelation 3:19.)

These practical uses of adversity are not answers to the whole of this great problem, but they give hints of the deep meaning of loss in our own lives and can teach us patient submission to the will of Him whose eternal love can be revealed through every experience of our lives.

VI.

The Voice Out of the Whirlwind—

Job Sees a Vision of God

(CHAPTERS 38-42:6)

Time and again through the book of Job runs the refrain, "If only God were here He would vindicate me and tell me why this evil has come." Job has stated,

"I will defend my ways to his face,"
(Job 13:15.)

and has cried to God,

"Behold, I have prepared my case;
• • • • •
Then call, and I will answer;
or let me speak, and do thou reply to me.
• • • • •
Why dost thou hide thy face . . . ?"
(Job 13:18, 22, 24.)

In the depth of his despair he has pleaded,

"Oh, that I knew where I might find him,
that I might come even to his seat!
I would lay my case before him
and fill my mouth with arguments.

I would learn what he would answer me,
 and understand what he would say to me.
 Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power?
 No; he would give heed to me.
 There an upright man could reason with him,
 and I should be acquitted for ever by my judge.”
 (Job 23:3-7.)

In his concluding speech Job has said,

“Oh, that I had one to hear me!
 (Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!)”
 (Job 31:35.)

Likewise the philosopher friends have said more than once, “If only God were here, He would side with us, and show up Job as a hypocrite and a scoundrel.” Zophar began his argument by saying to Job,

“... you say, ‘My doctrine is pure,
 and I am clean in God’s eyes.’
 But oh, that God would speak,
 and open his lips to you,
 and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom!
 For he is manifold in understanding.
 Know then that God exacts of you less than your
 guilt deserves.”

(Job 11:4-6.)

Both sides have cried, “If only God were here He would settle this argument, and answer the basic question, ‘Why?’”

Just at this point the anonymous dramatist, who does not hesitate to bring heaven as well as earth onto his stage, does a daring thing. The argument has been finished; all that human wisdom can say on the subject has been expressed. Then across the stage of the drama

comes a whirlwind! As we read the closing paragraphs of Elihu's speech we catch hints of the coming of the storm. We can picture Elihu speaking to the little group by the edge of the village, illustrating his description of God's greatness by pointing to the massive storm clouds gathering on the distant horizon.

“Can any one understand the spreading of the clouds,
the thunderings of his pavilion?
Behold, he scatters his lightning about him,
· · · · ·
He covers his hands with the lightning,
and commands it to strike the mark.
Its crashing declares concerning him.”

(Job 36:29-30a, 32-33a.)

As the storm ominously approaches he goes on:

“Hearken to the thunder of his voice
and the rumbling that comes from his mouth.
Under the whole heaven he lets it go,
and his lightning to the corners of the earth.
After it his voice roars;
he thunders with his majestic voice
and he does not restrain the lightnings when
his voice is heard.

(Job 37:2-4.)

As it increases in violence Elihu says,

“God thunders wondrously with his voice;
he does great things which we cannot comprehend.
· · · · ·
From its chamber comes the whirlwind,
and cold from the scattering winds.

He loads the thick cloud with moisture;
the clouds scatter his lightning."

(Job 37:5, 9, 11.)

Elihu may well have closed his long argument to Job by pointing to the rapidly approaching storm and crying:

"Hear this, O Job;
stop and consider the wondrous works of God.
Do you know how God lays his command upon them,
and causes the lightning of his cloud to shine?
Do you know the balancings of the clouds,
the wondrous works of him who is perfect in
knowledge . . . ?

Out of the north comes golden splendor;
God is clothed with terrible majesty.
The Almighty—we cannot find him;
he is great in power and justice,
and abundant righteousness he will not violate."

(Job 37:14-16, 22-23.)

Perhaps he never was able to finish in the roar of the approaching whirlwind sweeping across the plains straight toward the spot where they were sitting.

In Stuart Walker's drama on the book of Job, the storm is pictured as forming in the distance while Elihu is speaking. There are streaks of lightning, and thunder sounds over Job's deserted pasture lands. As the storm moves closer old Eliphaz grows visibly nervous and agitated, and then beats a hurried retreat through the growing wind. Bildad soon follows. Zophar looks anxiously about him, mutters something about his herds left in the pasture, and runs for shelter. Elihu's pompous discourses begin to halt, and just before the

fury of the storm opens he ceases speaking and dashes away for cover. Job remains to face alone the power of the storm. He stoically kneels down to receive the destruction of the tornado.¹

But suddenly out of the tornado there comes, not death, but the voice of Jehovah God! A whirlwind several times in the Old Testament is used to symbolize the coming of God. In Elijah's great theophany at Mount Sinai we read that the Lord passed by in a great strong wind which broke the rocks in pieces. (1 Kings 19:11.) At the end of Elijah's life we read that a whirlwind took him up into heaven. (2 Kings 2:11.) Ezekiel's great vision of God opens with the words: "As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud, with brightness round about it, and fire flashing forth continually, and in the midst of the fire, as it were gleaming bronze." (Ezekiel 1:4.) Nahum, Zechariah, and the author of the Eighteenth Psalm all speak of God's coming in the wind or the whirlwind. In the New Testament we read that on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came, "suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." (Acts 2:2.) The author of Job chose a whirlwind to signify the presence of Almighty God. God Himself will now take the stage and justify His own ways to man, and answer the great question, "Why?"

"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:
‘Who is this that darkens counsel by words without
knowledge?’"

(Job 38:1-2.)

The words of God continue through chapters 38, 39, 40, and 41. Some scholars have said that the speeches of Jehovah in these chapters are the finest poetry in the whole Bible, and are without parallel in all the literature of the world.² There is an intensity of emotion, an appreciation of nature, and an insight into human life which have never been surpassed. As we read these chapters we find some-

thing quite unexpected. God says none of the things we expect of Him. There is not a word spoken directly about the problem which has been under discussion for the past thirty-six chapters. He does not mention the meaning of suffering. He does not refer to what took place between Himself and Satan in the heavenly courts when the drama opened. He does not refer to Job's dream of life after death, or to his vision of a Redeemer. He reveals no deep secret which will unravel the mystery of God's way with His world. In fact, at first reading the whole section seems irrelevant.

The Questionnaire

Instead of Job's boldly throwing his questions in God's face, God becomes the interrogator.

“Gird up your loins like a man,
I will question you, and you shall declare to me.”
(Job 38:3.)

Then for two chapters God plies Job with questions, about forty in all. There is nothing easy about them; the wisest scientists would have difficulty in answering them today. Some of the questions are:

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.”
(Job 38:4.)

In other words, “What holds up the world?” or, in modern times, “Why does the law of gravity keep the earth in its orbit?”

“Who decided how big the world should be?”
“Who determines where the sea shall stop, and the land begin?”
“Job, can you make the morning come when you are ready?”
“Do you cause the day to end, and the night to draw near?”
“Job, do you know how the sun makes its light?”
“Can you make thunder, or lightning, or cause the wind to blow in any direction you desire?”

"Can you bring dew to the earth, or frost?"

"Can you change the stars in the sky, or rearrange the constellations?"

"Job, do you understand how the animals of the wilderness regulate their lives—how the lions and ravens get their food, how the mountain goats breed, how the wild asses live in the waste places, how the ostriches rear their young, how the horses have such strength, how the hawks and eagles soar in the air?"

Such are the questions God asks Job. We notice the magnificent sweep of these chapters, surveying all nature to show the glory of God. The foundations of the earth, the sea, the sky and clouds, the snow and hail, the thunder and rain, the frost and ice, the stars and constellations, the wild beasts and birds—all have their place. In no other poem in all literature is the greatness and wonder of God's creation more majestically expressed. Most of the questions in chapter 38 deal with inanimate nature—the creation of the world, the sea and land, the changes of weather, the stars and sun. Throughout chapter 39 the questions are about animals—the mountain goat, the wild ass, the ostrich, the horse, the hawk, the eagle. Most of these animals are animals of the wilderness which man has not been able to control. The war horse (Job 39:19-25), though occasionally used by the Hebrew people in battle, was still regarded with awe, a creature to be treated with special respect. It represented the most effective military power known. The eagle and the hawk were the two birds least amenable to humans. Their habits were mysteries to man—but God made them and knows their ways. God cares, in a manner that man cannot comprehend, for these wild creatures who live in the wastes of the wilderness. God cares for His creature man also, even though this care is also in ways we cannot understand.

The purpose behind the questions is not to answer directly the problem which has been under discussion, but to give Job a vision of the glory of God. God is not teaching Job natural history, but rather giving him insight into the greatness of the Almighty. One

commentator has written, "The first speech of Jehovah transcends all other descriptions of the wonders of the creation or the greatness of the Creator, which are to be found either in the Bible or elsewhere."⁸

God is speaking not only to Job, but also to his friends. He is saying, in effect, "It is impossible for you to understand all the mystery of the universe. You philosopher friends, who assume you have all the divine ways reduced to a neat little syllogism, and you, Job, fretting yourself because you cannot reduce my ways to the capacities of your own finite mind, remember that my 'thoughts are not your thoughts nor my ways your ways.' " (Isaiah 55:8.) God is here giving all of them a glimpse of the greatness, the mystery, the wonder of the universe, that they may have a vision of the greatness, wisdom, and glory of God, of whom the universe is an expression. As an answer to their problem they are receiving a vision of God Himself. Instead of learning the abstract truth they thought they needed, they were receiving the presence of God Himself as the answer to all their needs. As Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied." (John 14:8.)

We desperately need today that vision of God in the midst of the evil of our world. We need to look up, as did John on Patmos years later, and see above the cruel power of Rome, above the throne of the despot Domitian, the Lord God omnipotent reigning. We need to see every nagging worry and sneaking fear which penetrates the citadel of our minds in the light of an all-powerful and all-loving God. Just because we are confused with what is happening in the world we need not think God is at the end of His rope. We should not project our confusion upon God.

God sums up His questions by saying:

"Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?
He who argues with God, let him answer it."
(Job 40:1-2.)

Job's Reaction

In Job's answer we see the beginning of a drastic change in the old patriarch. His bold assertion that he will put God to the question and try Him for His unjust ways is gone. He who so desperately wished to lay his case before the eternal God is now silent. We read,

"Then Job answered the Lord;
'Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer thee?
I lay my hand on my mouth.
I have spoken once, and I will not answer;
twice, but I will proceed no further.'"

(Job 40:3-5.)

Pride and self-righteousness are being overshadowed by the vision of God. Submission is not coming without a struggle, and Job has to put his hand on his mouth to keep back the hot questioning; but in the presence of God he is beginning to learn trust and humility. His questions about the reason for suffering and the justice of God's ways are still unanswered, but a new dimension is entering his consciousness—that of God's eternal wisdom and power. Job is realizing the limitations of his own knowledge and righteousness. He is beginning, not to solve the problem, but to rise above it. For the first time in the book he is taking his mind off himself, and putting it on the great Creator. Until this point he has been trying desperately to save his own life, and thus surely losing it, as both Jesus and modern psychologists have shown. Now he is beginning to forget his own life in the contemplation of God's greatness, which is the first step toward saving it. This revelation of God has contributed nothing to the logical solution of the problem, but it has already accomplished a far more remarkable change in Job than all the philosophers' arguments and accusations could do.

God's Second Speech

The statement of Job at this point is purely negative, far from true repentance. He is ready to keep silence before God, but as yet he has revealed no readiness to submit his stubborn will to God's control. So God returns to the challenge in the same words as before.

"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:
 'Gird up your loins like a man;
 I will question you, and you declare to me.'"
 (Job 40:6-7.)

But this time there is a direct answer to Job's whole position of self-justification. It is a pivotal passage for understanding the book. God says,

"Will you even put me in the wrong?
 Will you condemn me that you may be justified?"
 (Job 40:8.)

God is here revealing Job's true sin. In insisting on his own righteousness Job has indicted the justice and goodness of God. His crime has not been ethical sins against his fellow men, of the type he disavowed in his great Oath of Clearance. Rather, he has set himself up as the judge of God Himself, which is the supreme blasphemy.

God now speaks directly to Job's sin,

"Have you an arm like God,
 and can you thunder with a voice like his?"
 (Job 40:9.)

Then God goes on to say, in terms almost sarcastic,

"Deck yourself with majesty and dignity;
 clothe yourself with glory and splendor.

Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low;
 and tread down the wicked where they stand.

Hide them all in the dust together;
bind their faces in the world below.
Then will I also acknowledge to you,
that your own right hand can give you victory."
(Job 40:10, 12-14.)

With stinging irony God is rebuking the self-righteousness of Job. "If you are as great as you think you are, then *you* put on all the splendor of deity; *you* take over the task of bringing righteousness and justice in the world, since you seem to think you can do it so much better than I! *You* be God, if you think you know how to run the universe, and I will bow down and worship *you*!" God is saying, "Job, you do not have the majesty and glory of the Eternal Creator; you cannot control the evil in the world; you are not deity; therefore you need not the answer to your questions, but faith in God!"

Then God resumes His questionnaire, revealing His power and glory in the natural world. But in chapters 40 and 41 we find this done in a different way; we have long descriptions of two creatures called Behemoth and Leviathan. Behemoth is translated hippopotamus, and Leviathan crocodile. The detailed descriptions of these two animals, occupying most of two chapters, seem exaggerated and out of place here, and some scholars have suggested they were not a part of the original poem. This is to miss the point completely. The descriptions here are not of ordinary animals, as in God's first speech, but are of two symbolic creatures which played a most significant role in ancient mythology. The great sea monster was a symbol of the primeval chaos God had to conquer to bring His creation under control. One of the earliest stories of creation was of God's destroying the monster of the deep, Tiamat or Rahab or Leviathan, representing the primeval chaos, to make the universe an orderly one under His control. This story is often referred to in ancient apocalyptic literature, and occasionally in the Old Testament.

“Yet God my King is from old,
 working salvation in the midst of the earth.
 Thou didst divide the sea by thy might;
 thou didst break the heads of the dragons on the waters.
 Thou didst crush the heads of Leviathan,
 thou didst give him as food for the creatures of the
 wilderness.”

(Psalm 74:12-14.)

We also read in Isaiah,

“Awake, awake, put on strength,
 O arm of the Lord;
 awake, as in days of old,
 the generations of long ago.
 Was it not thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces,
 that didst pierce the dragon?
 Was it not thou that didst dry up the sea,
 the waters of the great deep;
 that didst make the depths of the sea a way
 for the redeemed to pass over?”

(Isaiah 51:9-10.)

Representation of sea monsters appears often in ancient Egyptian symbolism. So the passages here in Job are not to be taken as literal descriptions of crocodiles and hippopotamuses as we know them, but as mythological representations of the great forces of disunity and chaos God has brought under His control. The closing verse of the long description of Leviathan reveals this.

“He beholds everything that is high;
 he is king over all the sons of pride.”
 (Job 41:34.)

So these two chapters, tedious and involved though they seem, in reality sum up the purpose of the whole questionnaire, which is to

hold before Job's eyes the greatness and power of a God whose glory is far above Job's imaginings. To one steeped in ancient Eastern mythology these passages were the most powerful exhibitions of God's greatness which could be conceived. They express one majestic thought—the Lord God omnipotent rules over all. Job would be utterly powerless before monsters like these. (See the almost humorous questions in the passage 40:24—41:11.) But if God can control Behemoth and Leviathan—that is, if God could subdue the ancient chaos when the earth was dark without form, and could bring out of it a universe of order and meaning—that same God can be trusted to control Job's affairs.

Job's Repentance

By the end of the description of God's glory Job is ready to make a complete and positive act of repentance, which is the climax of the book.

"Then Job answered the Lord:
'I know that thou canst do all things,
and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted.

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • •
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

• • • • • • • • • • • • •
I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees thee;
therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.'"

(Job 42:1-6.)

Job repeats the words God used in questioning him (Job 42:3a, 4), and answers that he himself is the guilty one.

The first thing which is revealed by Job's act of repentance is his new estimate of God. His previous knowledge of God was mere

hearsay; but now he knows from his own experience God's matchless glory and care. He realizes now that all things are under God's control. Even more important, he is absolutely certain of God's righteousness. Instead of hot questionings and resentments there is the quiet submission of his life to God. Job is beginning to see, not the God of the popular theology of that day, with all its limitations and misconceptions, but God as He really is, infinitely greater in every way than man had imagined Him. Job does not know all the answers, but now he knows the God who has all things under His loving care.

"Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me."⁴

The words of Job in this section suggest the supreme lesson of the book. A careful study of them reveals the basis of all true religion, justification by faith. He has learned that the just shall live, not by their own righteousness, but by faith in God. Job in his vision of God has found the same answer to the problem of suffering which is suggested to us both by the prophets and by the New Testament. The fact is established that the innocent do suffer, but this is not due to God's carelessness or to His evil purpose; it is a manifestation of God's wisdom and power.

The finest answer to the whole problem which the Old Testament offers, outside the book of Job, is the Suffering Servant of Second Isaiah. In many respects the details of his affliction parallel that of Job. He, too, represents innocent suffering. But the purpose of his suffering is stated—the redemption of others.

"But he was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that made us whole,
and with his stripes we are healed."

(Isaiah 53:5.)

The Servant himself, like Job, must have faith in God's wisdom and mercy.

Job also points toward the final answer the New Testament presents in Jesus Christ. Here is the supreme example of the only truly Innocent One experiencing undeserved suffering. The whole point of Christ's atoning work is that it was an innocent person suffering—the Lamb without blemish. The purpose is given—for the redemption of the world. The Lamb without blemish is slain for the sins of the world. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21.) Job, by his suffering to vindicate the righteousness of God, prepares the way for the Cross, which is the final answer to why good people suffer. The theme of the New Testament is that God Himself, the Holy One, suffered for the salvation of all. It is the theme of Paul's theology. One commentary calls Paul's epistle to the Romans, "The New Testament enlargement of the book of Job."⁵

In a sense all God's servants must suffer for the redemption of the world. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24.) Or, as Paul put it, "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church." (Colossians 1:24.) Christian experience is much like that of Job: In our daily suffering we must live by our faith in God's righteousness revealed to us, who are Christians, in the Cross.

Job has also reached a new estimate of himself, exactly the opposite of the old. Instead of self-deification, ready to pass judgment on God Himself, Job now says,

"Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes."

(Job 42:3, 6.)

Job is repenting, not of the crimes against society which the friends had emphasized, but of the basic sin of all, rebellion against God. Just now, at the moment of salvation, he sees the heinousness of his crimes. Only a vision of God can lead us to see ourselves as we are. As Isaiah said when he repented in the temple, "For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" (Isaiah 6:5.) Now Job, instead of insisting on proud defense of himself, is repenting in dust and ashes. It is an act of complete surrender, and the dedication of his own will to the will of his Creator. Job is now ready to live, not by his own integrity and righteousness, but by faith in the eternal purposes of God. Job has found what he really needs—not an answer to his questions, but trust in God. Thus the true drama takes place, not in the courts of heaven, nor in the fields of Uz, but in the heart of Job, a representative of everyman. The basic purpose of the book of Job is to call on all men to accept by faith the grace of God.

VII.

Happily Ever After— *The Epilogue*

(CHAPTER 42:7-17)

The epilogue is a formal picture of Job's forgiveness and restoration. Some students believe that this section, with its stylized restoration of Job's material fortunes, spoils the literary effect of the book—that the author would have shown more skill had he omitted this conclusion of the old patriarchal tradition handed down from a more naïve age. However, the proper figure by which the author should picture God's forgiveness, and the restoration which follows man's true repentance, is in this same story of Job's fortunes. Since the belief in life after death was so poorly developed at that stage of history it is necessary for all God's restoration to be pictured in terms of the present life. This last section is a rounding out of the whole cycle of Job's life, and is essential to show God's response to true repentance. It is not only artistically necessary for the story; it is theologically necessary for the divine truth revealed.

God first turns to the three friends, who evidently have not shown the repentance Job has but are still holding to their self-righteous philosophy. (Notice that Elihu is not mentioned.) Twice God says to them that they "have not spoken of me what is right." Most of the things they have said about God are true, of course. But they have tried to "whitewash" God's providence by their own theory of moral government, and as partisans of God have felt free to distort facts and utter positive untruths. Job at least has been intellectually honest,

which cannot be said of the friends. Even Job's resentful questioning of God is more acceptable than their dogmatic assumption that the Almighty must be confined to their own little closed system. What is even more serious, they have revealed no spirit of love and forgiveness. With their Pharisaical self-complacency they have miserably failed in mediating divine comfort to their friend in his distress. God now decrees that their repentance is to be expressed by burnt offerings of seven bulls and seven rams. Their humiliation is furthered when God tells them that Job is to serve as their priest, that their way to restoration will be through the prayers of this one they had so bitterly condemned as being utterly ungodly! "And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." (Job 42:8.) They who had prided themselves on their acceptableness to God are to be accepted only through Job's intercession! But we read that the three friends swallowed the bitter pill with true humility, and were forgiven and accepted by God.

Job's restoration also is linked with his prayer for his friends. Unless our repentance to God finds expression in a new attitude toward our fellow men it is not complete. Our new estimate of God and of ourselves must find practical application in our relations to others. Not until Job sincerely prays for the welfare of those who had wrongfully slandered and persecuted him is his repentance complete.

Job's Restoration

The final paragraph relates in stylized form how Job's fortunes are restored. His relatives and friends are reunited to him, bringing sympathy and comfort. Evidently his disease is healed; if it were leprosy the very fact that his relatives and friends "ate bread with him in his house" (Job 42:11) would show that he was no longer a leper. Each brought a gift to help recoup the lost fortunes. A busi-

nessman as author would probably relate how Job so wisely invested these gifts that in a short time he was twice as wealthy as before. The record here prefers to state that "the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning." (Job 42:12.)

In place of seven thousand sheep he now has fourteen thousand; the three thousand camels are now six thousand; the five hundred yoke of oxen and the five hundred asses become a thousand each. More children are born, but it is interesting that the number is again ten, and not doubled to show his increased prosperity. Even in those days it was probably recognized that twenty children would be a dubious blessing! Perhaps to show that old Job is not so crushed by all his misfortunes that he cannot appreciate the beautiful things of life, we are told the names he gave the three daughters. The first he named Jemimah, meaning dove; the second Keziah, meaning cinnamon ointment; and the third Kerenhappuch, which means literally the little horn in which ladies kept their eyebrow paint, but which had become a synonym for beauty. We are told that the three daughters were the fairest girls in all the land. Job loved them so much he inaugurated women's rights, by giving them a share in the inheritance—unheard-of in those days!

Job lived to a ripe old age, with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren playing about his knees. "And Job died, an old man, and full of days." Thus ends the book, and one ancient translation (the Septuagint) adds words which were probably not a part of the original writing but which express the faith of us who are privileged to live later in the history of God's revelation: "And it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord will raise up."¹ Job's experience is summed up in the words of the New Testament writer, in the only place where Job is mentioned in the New Testament.* "As an example of suffering and patience, brethren, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

* Job is referred to in only one other place in the Bible, in a somewhat puzzling reference in the 14th chapter of Ezekiel.

Behold, we call those happy who were steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful." (James 5:10-11.)

* * * * *

We might well ask in closing, does the book of Job solve the problem it projects? Does it explain how a loving God can allow suffering and pain to come to His children? Does it justify the ways of God to man? Our answer must be that from a theoretical standpoint, though the book of Job throws as much light on the problem as any philosophy ever devised and gives insights into the moral values of suffering and clears up many points, it still leaves a mystery in God's ways with men.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts."
(Isaiah 55:9.)

However, the most important answer it gives is a practical one—how to go out and live a satisfying life in the face of hardship and disaster. Religion is not so much a philosophy as a way of life. The book of Job does contain the secret of successful living. The final answer of the book is not a theory of philosophy, but a challenge to live a dedicated life. Through faith in a God who uses even our pains and losses in His benevolent purposes for us, we can meet every experience of life. "The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17, K.J.V.)

"I asked God for strength, that I might achieve,
I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey.

I asked for health, that I might do great things,
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.

I asked for riches, that I might be happy,
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.

I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men,
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life,
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.

I got nothing that I asked for—but everything I had hoped
for,

Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.
I am among all men most richly blessed.”²

There are two great lacks in the book of Job. One is the lack of the knowledge of the Cross of Christ. Job often foreshadows the New Testament, particularly the great theological problems discussed by Paul in the letter to the Romans. We have also seen that the final answer of the book, the just shall live by his faith in God, is the answer of the New Testament. But Job lived too soon to know the decisive significance of the Cross for the whole problem of God’s dealing with men, and particularly for the profound problem of suffering itself. In the Cross God Himself suffered, to show us forever the meaning of pain. There the eternal Son of God was made “perfect through suffering.” (Hebrews 2:10.)

The other lack of the book of Job is a clear understanding of life in the world to come, with a vindication of the righteous in glory. Job caught glimpses, as we have seen, when he saw his Redeemer living and knew that after his own flesh had been destroyed he would see God vindicating him. (Job 19:25-27.) But the implications of such momentary insights were not developed.

Job’s vision of God was one part of the Old Testament preparation for the great climax of the history of revelation, when the angel

said to Joseph, "and his name shall be called Emmanuel (which means, God with us)." (Matthew 1:23.) Job lived too far back to see "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Not until almost at the end of the record of God's revelation would the seer of Patmos hear the "great voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.'" (Revelation 21:2-4.) Far back in the centuries Job had only a fleeting vision of Him "who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Revelation 1:5-6.)

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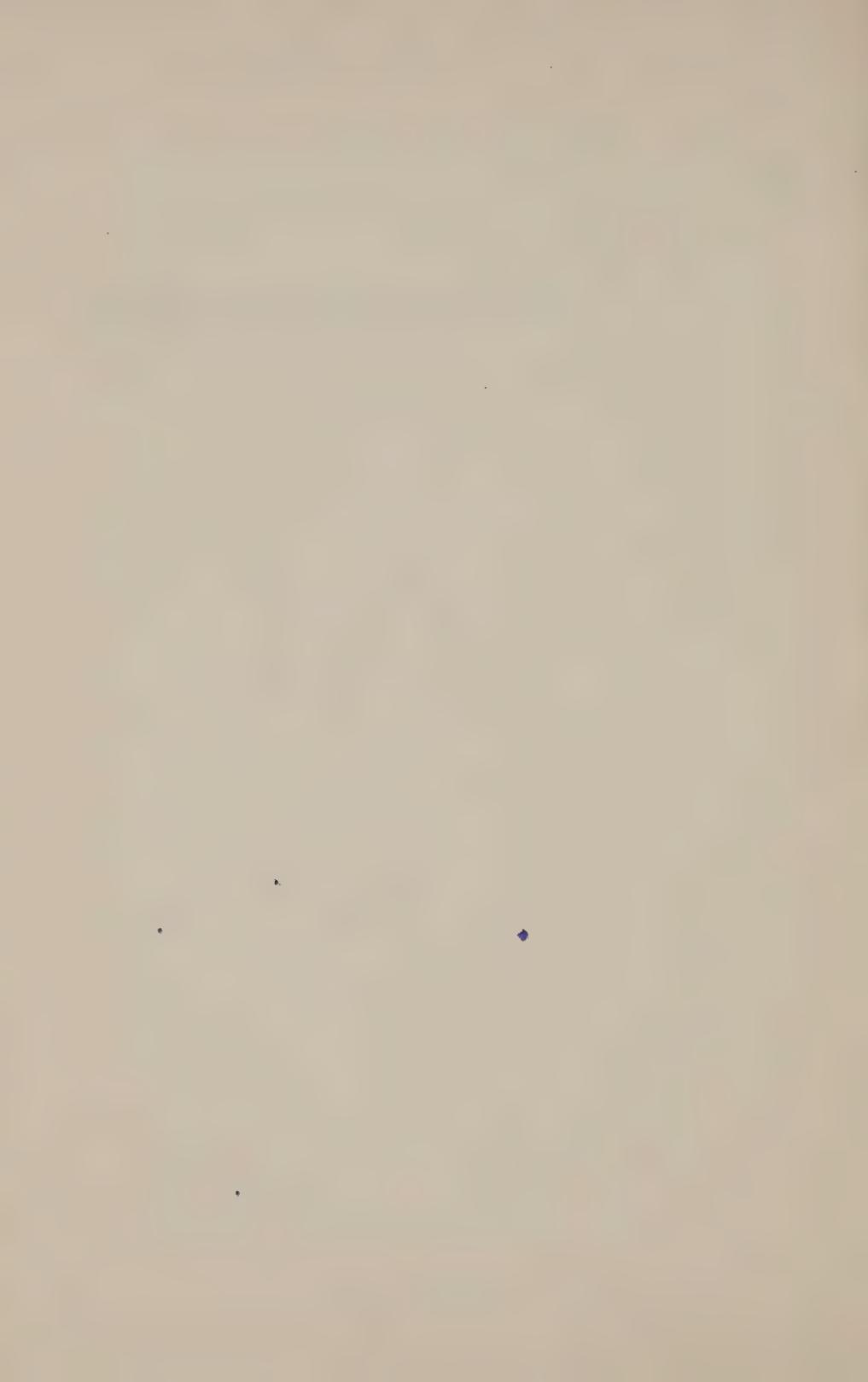
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NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Notes and Acknowledgments

I. Job Faces Calamity

1. Jeremiah 12:1. (R.S.V.) Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version, copyright 1946 and 1952 by Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

2. See E. G. Kraeling, *The Book of the Ways of God*, pp. 34, 185. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939;

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II. The Background of the Book

1. Samuel Terrien and Paul Scherer, "The Book of Job," *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. III, p. 905. New York: Abingdon Press, 1954.

2. E. G. Kraeling, *The Book of the Ways of God*, p. 5. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939. By permission.

3. A. R. King, *The Problem of Evil*, p. 103. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1952. By permission.

4. A. B. Davidson, *The Book of Job*, p. lxiii. Cambridge: University Press, 1951.

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7. See *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. V, p. 3042. James Orr, ed. Chicago: The Howard-Severance Co., 1930; and Robert A. Watson, "The Book of Job," *An Exposition of the Bible*, Vol. II, p. 697.
8. See S. R. Driver and J. B. Gray, *The Book of Job*, in *The International Critical Commentary*, p. xxviii.
9. See S. R. Driver, *The Book of Job*, pp. x-xi. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906.
10. See William B. Stevenson, *The Poem of Job*, pp. 56-72, for a detailed study of the structure of its style. London: Oxford University Press, 1947.

IV. Justifying God's Ways—The Great Argument

1. See Anthony and Miriam Hanson, *The Book of Job*, pp. 7ff. London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1953.
2. Terrien and Scherer, "The Book of Job," *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. III, pp. 925-926.
3. From Thornton Wilder, *The Angel That Troubled the Waters and Other Plays*. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1928. By permission.
4. Arthur S. Peake, *A Commentary on the Bible*, p. 354. New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1919. By permission.
5. Quoted by A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 988. Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1907. By permission.
6. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act III, Scene iii, lines 72-75.
7. R. C. Cabot and R. L. Dicks, *The Art of Ministering to the Sick*, p. 91. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936. By permission.
8. Alleman and Flack, *Old Testament Commentary*, p. 520.

V. A Strange Interruption—Elihu the Buzite

1. The fact that Elihu is not mentioned in the prologue or epilogue and that some interpreters find difficulty in fitting his speeches into the actual progress of the argument lend weight to this assumption. The style is somewhat different from the rest of the book, being verbose and rhetorical. See W. B. MacLeod, *The Afflictions of the Righteous*, pp. 211ff., for eight reasons why these chapters were written by a later hand, and five arguments for unity authorship. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
2. Cabot and Dicks, *The Art of Ministering to the Sick*, p. 92.
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5. Author unknown. J. D. Morrison, ed., *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, p. 435. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948. By permission.

VI. The Voice Out of the Whirlwind

1. See King, *The Problem of Evil*, p. 13.
2. See MacLeod, *The Afflictions of the Righteous*, p. 244; and Mary Ellen Chase, *The Bible and the Common Reader*, pp. 214, 217. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944.
3. MacLeod, *The Afflictions of the Righteous*, pp. 243, 244. London: Hodder & Stoughton. By permission.
4. J. H. Newman, "The Pillar of the Cloud." *Masterpieces of Religious Verse*, p. 89.
5. Hanson and Hanson, *The Book of Job*, p. 19. London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1953. By permission.

VII. Happily Ever After—The Epilogue

1. MacLeod, *The Afflictions of the Righteous*, p. 287.
2. Author unknown. Said to have been written by a Confederate soldier. See *Time* magazine, Vol. LXVII, No. 1.

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